

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Student Suspensions Review Sub Panel

FRIDAY, 23rd OCTOBER 2009

Panel:

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Chairman)
Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade
Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John
Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour

Witnesses:

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)
Mr. M. Lundy
Ms. J. Forrest

In Attendance:

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer)
Ms. G. Bunting (Adviser)
Professor P. Munn (Professor of Curriculum Research at the University of Edinburgh, Adviser)

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Chairman):

I must draw the witnesses' attention to the statement which I know they are well aware of on the desk. I would like everyone to introduce themselves; that is just for the record. I will start with myself, Deputy Trevor Pitman. I am chairing the sub-panel and on my right ...

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:

Deputy Jeremy Maçon, representative of Petite Longueville of St. Saviour.

Ms. S. Power (Scrutiny Officer):

Sam Power, Scrutiny Officer.

Professor P. Munn (Professor of Curriculum Research at University of Edinburgh, Adviser):

I am Pamela Munn, a Professor of curriculum research at the University of Edinburgh and I am an adviser to the panel.

Connétable G.F. Butcher of St. John:

Graeme Butcher, Constable of St. John.

Ms. G. Bunting (Adviser):

I am Gillian Bunting, adviser to the panel.

Ms. J. Forrest (Principal Education Psychologist):

Jo Forrest, Principal Education Psychologist.

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Deputy James Reed, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Mr. M. Lundy (Director of Education, Sport and Culture):

Mario Lundy, Director of Education, Sport and Culture.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I would just remind the Minister and his director that we have 2 advisers here today and they are entitled to answer questions if it is of a technical nature, so I hope you have no problem with that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No, that is absolutely fine.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I welcome everyone to the session. We have slightly less than an hour now to get through it. The Minister has had, I hope, the question plans. Because I always like to be more than welcoming, I would like to start by asking something that is not on the actual question sheet and give the Minister or director, whoever wishes to start, the chance just to speak roughly about whether he thinks the policy as it is in place is working.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, first of all, just for completeness sake when I became Minister for Education, Sport and Culture there were a number of commitments I made and one was to review the current suspension policy which the department has been carrying out over the last number of months. As the panel will be aware, we have provided a draft policy for you to consider and it is our aim for the most part today to talk and focus our attention on the draft policy that we are developing. I also would hope that the work that your panel is doing in this regard will help to further ensure that the new revised policy is sufficiently robust and meets the requirements of parents, teachers and pupils.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just to clarify, the new policy is still draft at the moment, is it not?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

It is not in place though it has been indicated to schools.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is in draft.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But headmasters and head teachers have been advised of it?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes.

Mr. M. Lundy:

It is with governing bodies at the moment.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Okay, thank you. How do you feel about what we have got in place at present; is it working, is it not? Perhaps we could have a starter for 10.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think that with every policy there is always the ability to improve matters. I think that much is being learnt over the last 3 or 4 years and that generally the existing policy guides parents and teachers in addressing the issue. However, we did appreciate that there was a need, let us say, for the review and hence the strengthened policy that you have had sight of.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it is an interesting question. The suspension policy is working in so much as pupils are suspended. Whether or not it is an effective means of working with challenging young people and improving their behaviour is another question altogether and I think that is probably, you know, the critical issue. Suspension is a last resort and often it is a last resort when other measures have failed to be as successful as perhaps they could be. So I think if a suspension policy was really successful it would probably never have to be implemented.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Accepting fully what you are saying that things can always be improved, would you expect us in our research that we will be undertaking to come across situations where young people have been suspended and are now back at school but not being taught? They are just left on school premises. Would you be shocked if that kind of information was given to the panel?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I would not expect to find that as a matter of common practice.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could you clarify, you are not aware of such situations yet at present?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, we are aware of situations where the suspensions policy may not have been applied as it should have been applied. The actual detail of those situations I could not comment on at this point in time, but inevitably in a school system that has some 13,000 pupils, the likelihood is that somewhere along the way policies may be inconsistently applied and that is where we have monitoring mechanisms and systems to pick up those issues and that we use those issues as learning opportunities.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

If such a situation does exist - and I have to say I have been advised, contacted, about one such situation - what does that suggest to you as a Minister and as a director if we have young people on school premises, they are there but they are not being taught anything, left just to roam premises?

Mr. M. Lundy:

You are asking me to comment on individual situations of which I do not have detailed knowledge so I could not possibly do that. In general terms, I would not expect that to be happening.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Would you, in such a situation and, okay, we cannot be too specific but would that be down to the

individual school to sort out or would that be seen as a failure perhaps in the very top?

Mr. M. Lundy:

If that is happening within a school, then it is not in line with department policy so that is an issue that we would have to take up with the school. So if that was brought to our attention then we would hold the school to account for it.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would just like to add that even with the current policy it is important to recognise and there is guidance provided to encourage parents or others to approach the department where they have concerns and, clearly, I mean from what you have just told us, I think the advice that I would give to the parent involved is to contact the department and express their views directly with the department so we are properly aware of the situation and we can deal with it, because it is not our intention at all to abandon any individual and not provide the correct support of their educational needs as outlined in our draft policy and indeed, if you go on our website, our current policy.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I fully accept that, Minister. I am glad to hear you stress that. It is certainly not a trick question and now hopefully we can, as what we discover progresses, work with you both to ensure if that is happening that it is rectified. One other area I would just like to touch on, on the general policy, because I have to say I had hoped you would be a bit more in-depth but hopefully that will come out from the other questions. I will pass over to one of my colleagues shortly but could you just clarify for me, would students who have been suspended from one particular school say, and it gets to the point where they need to be moved to another school, how does that process work?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think we would ask the Educational Psychologist to answer that question on that particular process.

Ms. J. Forrest:

The system that we operate with schools involves working closely with schools to identify and address any individual difficulties that pupils are experiencing, and that is not just regarding behaviour. I would suggest that behaviour is a symptom of how a person is experiencing life. So we are looking at children in the round here; we are not just looking at behaviour and, you know, keep suppressing ... or we are looking at addressing young people's needs. One effect of which is to reduce the need to suspend, so that is very important. Now given that framework, and we have a well articulated framework with schools known as the 'graduated response' which educationalists will be familiar with, which is about early identification of any difficulties a child might be experiencing in school for whatever reason and steps to address those. So you would expect quite a large number, maybe up to 20 per cent, of young people to be identified as possibly needing more care and attention within the school system. As those identified needs are addressed, a lesser number may need a greater degree of support et cetera. We run a system whereby we have, as well as our mainstream schools, special schools for children with learning difficulties and children with social and emotional behaviour difficulties. The system that I have just described to you is a way of over time, identifying through children's response to supportive arrangements to address their identified needs, the very small number of individuals for whom mainstream education might not be appropriate at any particular time. So that is our basic process. Now, inevitably there are some occasions when that process is overtaken by an event in school where a pupil's behaviour is such that disciplinary action has to be taken. There are hierarchies of disciplinary actions in schools as well and suspension is the end of the line. It is worth saying I think that in Jersey although there is provision for expulsion I have been here 3 and a half years and it has not happened since I have been here, so when you consider suspensions you are talking ... If you try to compare with other jurisdictions we only have fixed term suspensions and anywhere else you look at, as well as

whatever they are quoting for fixed term suspensions, they will also have figures for permanent expulsion. The point is that we manage the small number of situations where it is in the young person's interests to be educated in a special setting rather than a mainstream setting through a needs based approach. There certainly are occasions when the process gets speeded up a bit because there has been a difficult situation in school that has resulted in suspensions and we regard it as being in the child's interest as well as the school's interest to speed up the process, but the suspension is not an integral part of the process of managing the transition from mainstream to special.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

If I could just pin you down and I do not mean that in a rude way, but does a process exist - and I do not mean this term to be disrespectful either - where almost horse trading takes place where a school needs to take Pupil X and they will trade him for Pupil Y because those students ... for whatever reason, they have come to the conclusion that they cannot get on in that particular school so they will be moved over here and they will take another one in return. Is that the situation any of our schools are in?

Ms. J. Forrest:

No.

Mr. M. Lundy:

No, not at all. There is a proper assessment procedure, a needs-based analysis and an assessment panel to determine whether or not a young person is offered another place. I think this is very important because I think you would be hard pushed to find any jurisdiction in Europe with which you can say children are not permanently excluded or expelled from school. You could argue, of course, that by making arrangements for them to move to another school that is effectively what is happening but it is not because expulsion effectively leaves the young person and the parents with a problem as to where the young person is now going to be educated. In other words, the school has said: "That is enough, we cannot do any more" and we do not allow that to happen. What we do is make sure that there is a proper assessment of need and if it is in the young person's best interest to be educated in an alternative provision, and we have some very successful alternative provisions, then to make sure that there is a managed move from one to another that is based on an assessment of need.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Indeed, in the draft policy on page 5 we highlight a number of alternatives to exclusion which enables head teachers and parents to respond to serious breaches of behaviour policy. You will notice there that there is an area which is highlighted as managed move and it describes what process will be followed.

Mr. M. Lundy:

This is also quite an important point because it is not necessarily the formal procedures that caused the real problems, it is the informal procedures and by managing things in this way we minimise informal opportunities to move children from school to school. I will give you a classic example which is something that has happened in other jurisdictions where a young person is brought in with parents to a school and it is explained that you probably should find another school because if you do not you are going to face expulsion. Now, that cannot happen in Jersey.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

It is good to have that on record. As I say, I use the term horse trading. I guess that is another area which you would be very surprised if we turned up evidence to the contrary.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I mean that is the second issue that you have raised in terms of an individual's circumstances and I think whether or not you turn up evidence, I think we would wish to investigate it to find out what was

happening. To our knowledge that is not happening and, of course, what your evidence may suggest as trading may not in actual fact be what is happening unless you have managed to find out what..

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

We fully accept that.

Mr. M. Lundy:

You know, the evidence comes from more than one side is what I am basically saying but we have no evidence that that is happening. We would not allow that to happen and we control the admissions process for schools. There are instances, I should point out, where parents request a move for a whole range of reasons and the move might well be because they do not feel that the child's needs are being met at that school or because there are other issues; maybe perhaps an issue of bullying or something like that and the parents have requested it.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Okay, Director, I do want to pass over to the adviser. Just one final point, you are assuring us as I understand it then that there is absolutely no pressure put on schools to trade students at all to try and keep them in the system.

Mr. M. Lundy:

There is no pressure put on schools to try and trade schools, no.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you.

Professor P. Munn:

It is really to follow up on the management rules process and, of course, you are absolutely right, in other jurisdictions in the U.K. (United Kingdom) there is something called permanent exclusion where a child is removed from the school register. One of the things that is characteristic of all of these systems, though, is that parents have rights in that system. I wondered if you would like to say something about parental involvement in the process of assessing needs and in deciding whether a move is required or not.

Ms. J. Forrest:

Certainly. We follow a 'Record of Need' system which I understand is very strong in the Scottish system rather than the statement system in the U.K. As part of that process, parents are involved in giving permission for the process, their views are actively sought, schools are required to consult with parents over their submissions, so where we have been aware of a pupil's difficulties over a sufficient period of time that process is in place then that is the way ... there is a process for parent use to fit in. There are instances where, because of what I explained earlier, the system has to get speeded up a bit because something has happened that it is in everybody's interests for things to get speeded up a bit and in that case the current school is required to provide information about how they have implemented the graduated response and the work that has gone on in school and submit that to a panel which includes representatives of school sectors, head teacher representatives. The outcome of that panel may very well be to go back to the school and support them to do more work, but if the outcome for the panel is that we would offer a place in a school outside mainstream, then I will write on behalf of the panel to the parents explaining what we have discussed, what we have decided and why and inviting the parents to contact me for any discussions they might want to have. They are also given the name of the school to which we are proposing a child moves at this time, because these are not once and for all decisions; children can move back into mainstream after a settling in period.

Professor P. Munn:

But if a parent does not accept the advice of a panel what happens there?

Ms. J. Forrest:

We continue to work with them and both schools to try and find a mutually acceptable way forward. I have to say I have got a case at the moment where we are in the middle of that process and have not yet come to a resolution.

Professor P. Munn:

Would the same process work for moves between say 2 mainstream schools?

Ms. J. Forrest:

No, between 2 mainstream schools the process would be managed centrally so if the officer who manages admissions to schools is made aware that a parent is unhappy with things at a current school, he will contact me and my team, our education psychologists, specialist teachers and education welfare officers, and we will work with the parents in the current school to see if we can unpick whatever the problem is that has led to the request for another school. Because if a move is made without attempts to unpick what the problem is for the young person then the risk is that the same problem will crop up in the new school. So we put our efforts into working with the current school and doing bridge building between parents and schools and, as I say, usually our psychologist and educational welfare officer will be involved. Now in some cases that works, but in some cases it does not. If things have irretrievably broken down we would then, from the centre, approach the other school (if there is a place) where a move might be considered and make sure that all the information about the child's needs including what we have learnt through our bridge building work is available to the new school and that a proper transition is made with all proper information and preparation for supporting the people in a new school to try and make sure the same problem does not happen again.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Just for clarification schools have no authority to orchestrate a move between mainstream schools unless ...

Professor P. Munn:

No, right. That is helpful.

Mr. M. Lundy:

... the parent is saying, you know, they are moving house and this school would be more convenient, something like that. But schools do not have the authority to orchestrate a move; they have to tell us.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Okay, thank you for that.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Just a quick question; you mentioned the panel. Could you just quickly explain the makeup of the panel and who sits on it?

Ms. J. Forrest:

The panel basically consists of myself, the Senior Education Welfare Officer, the Head of Pupil Support and senior educational psychologists for vulnerable students or child development depending on the nature of the need. You will appreciate there is not a high number so we have the people we need. We would also have the head of whatever special or alternative provision is being requested and wherever possible we would have made sure that that head teacher has been involved so they can take a view

really about whether they think this is going to be worth pursuing, and then we will also have a representative head teacher. If it is a primary school child, we will have a representative primary school head teacher who is not from the school that is requesting us to consider the move. If it is a secondary age group we would have the secondary head. So all those people might not be there for all the meetings but we have a rota of heads who we can draw on. For instance, if there is no attendance issue then we might not have the Senior Welfare Officer. If it is an emotional behavioural issue we might not have the child development specialist psychologist.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am conscious of the time so can we move to my colleague.

The Connétable of St. John:

Okay. Moving on to question one, can I ask you, Minister, the current suspension policy does not have an appeals procedure for parents or carers, do you believe there should be one and do you believe that without an appeals policy that it might not be human rights compliant?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The current policy does have an appeals procedure.

The Connétable of St. John:

Does it?

Mr. M. Lundy:

There are 2 issues if I can just clarify because these would be the issues that we see need to be addressed and are trying to address through the new policy. The first one is that there needs to be greater guidance to schools on the implementation of the suspension behavioural policies. We recognise that and the new policy tries to address that. The second issue is that there are generic appeal procedures, however there needs to be greater clarity to parents as to the rights that they have and as to the mechanisms that they can use to assert their rights, so there is a weakness there. The procedures exist but it is not clear enough to parents; they are not clear about their rights and they are not clear about the steps they can take to assert those rights, and that is what we are trying to do.

The Connétable of St. John:

So you need to improve communication.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, yes, we need to improve the guidance, the communication and also the structures. I think if you were to step back from it and, you know, this has not just been in respect of suspensions, this is in a sense about government moving forward. There has been a generic appeals procedure to the Minister. In the first instance, you would always expect parents to go to a school to try and address whatever concerns there were. Failing that, we do expect them to come to the department, after that the right of appeal to a Minister, following that they have the right of appeal to the Jersey Complaints Board, and after that judicial review. Now, most parents are not fully aware of that process but in changing the process, in making them more aware of it, we are trying to refine the process so we are trying to give the governing body a greater role in this so there is another layer in there, somewhere else that they can go to give the parents the right of representation to the governing body and, if necessary, the right to appeal to the governing body, and then after that to appeal to the Minister and through the process, Jersey Complaints Board, and if necessary judicial review.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Just to follow up on what my Chief Officer has said, I hope you will agree within the draft policy that we have provided to you we clearly set out parental rights and responsibilities on page 9. We then provided additional information toward the back of the document on information, advice to parents where pupils are both at primary school and secondary school level. One would hope that with regard to some of the issues that we have just spoken about, our aim is to make that information far more readily available, and in plain English hopefully, so that people can understand the processes that they are able to follow.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I just come in there, Graeme? How has it come to be that parents have not really been aware as much as they should be? I mean we have agreed that there is a lack of communication but how is that situation evolved that you now recognise the need to improve matters?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

My director will clearly pitch in but to my knowledge efforts have been made to provide information; leaflets are available. The schools aim to, first of all, be approachable. They encourage the parents to come and discuss issues and problems with the people who are directly responsible for their children while at school. We have over the last number of years improved our website and access to it. I still believe because I have used it myself that further improvements can be made to provide greater clarity, however there is clear information available to show the processes that people should follow. It is an issue. As I say, we are not suggesting for one minute that improvements cannot be made in our current procedures, hence the reason, and I come back to the commitment that the department made and myself to review the current policies to ensure not only that the parents can understand the process but equally that the schools and the teachers involved in managing pupil behaviour are equally clear about what is required from them. I do not know if you want to add anything, Jo.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think the point here is, it is not a question of how has it been allowed to happen. It is a question of modernising services and modernising government in Jersey. I mean ministerial government has just arrived, the Government is still seeking to implement a freedom of information law and all services throughout Jersey, you know, are going through a process of modernisation. This has not been a major issue in Jersey before but we are learning through experiences that we have had and experiences that parents have had of the need to improve guidance and communication in this area, and that is essentially what the new policy is designed to do.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can I ask you, what procedure do you follow when a child is excluded? I mean obviously these things are in place you say. When a child is excluded, do you give all that information to the parent at the time because if you do not, you should do? It impinges I believe on their human rights if that is not the case, if it is just in the big wide world and they have to go find it. If you exclude a child from school you should at least give that information to the parent at the time.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Exactly. The information is available and I think that is a flaw at the moment; that at the time the information is not necessarily passed directly to the parent so in the guidance that we provide to schools now in the draft policy what we are saying is that ...

The Connétable of St. John:

It should be more focussed to the people it concerns.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes, exactly. This is what is happening now, here are your rights and this is what you can do if you are not happy with this particular arrangement so that is what we are trying to get to.

The Connétable of St. John:

Because this is where you get a lot of the issues with the public; they feel they are not aware, they feel their human rights are being impinged and it is all about communication and it needs to be refocused to the people that it directly concerns, not just being the big wide world.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Absolutely, and that is what the draft policy is designed to achieve and I have no doubt there are many improvements yet to be made to the draft policy.

The Connétable of St. John:

But it is not happening at the moment.

Mr. M. Lundy:

But it is out to consultation. There is an expectation now that while waiting for the draft policy, and head teachers have been issued an instruction in relation to this, that when a young person is suspended the parents must at that point in time in a letter have explained to them their rights and the way that they can take forward any complaint should they not be happy, so that is an expectation at the moment even while we wait for the draft policy to be approved.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think the point needs to be made though that suspension is considered basically a last resort and there are a number of processes that are in place that the schools are well aware of to try and deal with and manage behavioural issues so we do not get to that point ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I think you have made that point and we understand that. We are one member short so I will have to change the question plan slightly and I will be going to Deputy Maçon, but one final question if I could ask is I believe it was the director who said that this had not really been a problem until recently, and you do look at the figures of the school suspensions - obviously we are not going to identify schools here today - but the number of suspensions are really out of sync with other schools. Does that not indicate that that has been a problem certainly for 2 or 3 years?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, I will just clarify what I mean by having been a problem and I think suspension is always a problem even if there are only a few suspensions. Probably not so much a problem as a challenge in that if someone is being suspended from school they are being deprived of their right to an education, so it is something that must be taken seriously. I think in terms of peaks and troughs we have seen over the years that different schools at different times because of circumstances at any one time, that their ... and it is inevitable, is it not, that the suspension figures in one school may well be higher than the suspension figures in another school and occasionally suspension figures soar. There could be many reasons for that. It can be because of a particularly different cohort of young people where a number of young people tend to get suspended over and over again. It could be because of the beginning of the tenure of a new head teacher who is looking to perhaps address discipline within the school in a very fair but firm way. It could be for a number of reasons; it could be to do with the actual numbers of pupils in the school. I think if you are looking at the data you are probably looking at one of the biggest schools in the Island as well, albeit that they are ... you know, you are talking about percentages.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But to pin you down on those terms ...

Mr. M. Lundy:

The important thing is not ... I mean I will not seek to explain in detail the rationale for those particular figures. What I would say to you is that where suspension figures appear to be high in a school then we act and I think if you were to look at suspension figures, if the figures you are talking about are the ones that I think you are talking about, then I would think if you look at the subsequent suspension ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Sorry to interrupt but: "Not a problem" you said. "Not a problem previously"; that is what you said. I mean that is what I am trying to get at.

Mr. M. Lundy:

No, I thought I would clarify what I meant by not a problem. Suspension is always a problem. The fact that a school has a higher suspension rate than another is something that we do not necessarily accept, we look into it, and as I said if the school you are talking about is the one I think you are talking about and you were to look at the subsequent year or this year, I think the figures are more in line because the department will have asked the questions of the school which is around the data. What is happening here, you know, what are the reasons for these suspensions? What policies and procedures do you have in place to support young people who appear to be challenging and getting themselves suspended? So it is not as if the school is left to their own devices. If suspension figures, and in fact of any other statistics, relating to a school show worrying trends, then we would be working with the school and challenging the school to say why and take steps to ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

We covered the next question so I would pass on to Deputy Maçon.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, Minister, you commented that suspensions should be a last resort. I wonder if you could just explain what avenues are available to schools other than issuing suspensions and then what steps are taken to ensure that suspensions are the last resort, and how effective are the other measures?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, as I said before there are a whole range of measures that are put in place aimed at avoiding the need to exclude children from school and, again, I draw your attention to page 4 of the draft policy where it is outlined what measures that might include. It expects the school to engage directly with the parents. We expect consideration by the Education Needs Co-ordinator with colleagues regarding specific interventions. We would expect schools to look at change of teaching set or class, if necessary.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

That is under the draft plan. I am interested in what is currently going on.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is the sort of work that has generally been happening within our school system. The draft policy that I am referring to is what I would suggest is a strengthened version of what we currently have in place.

Mr. M. Lundy:

If I can just clarify, the draft policy is communicating much of the stuff that is already happening in the

schools and the gap here is that it has not been laid out in that form before. There is a hierarchy of support and in each of our 11 to 16 schools, for example, there will be a resource with a behaviour minister, a school counsellor and an attendance officer. They have each got an independent learning support unit where they can work for short periods of time with young people out of the mainstream curriculum and then help them back into the mainstream curriculum. You will be aware that we tried to develop the concept of multi-agency support teams in each of our schools, each of which was to have ... well, in the pilot stage, 2 of which were to have social workers attached to the school but, unfortunately, it has not been possible to sustain that due to the difficulty in recruiting social workers to the post. So there are some very comprehensive resources within secondary schools to try and support some of our more challenging young people and that is necessarily, quite clearly, because our 11 to 16 schools are effectively carrying inclusion agenda for the whole Island.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Notwithstanding that, with all the different methods that are in place what is being done to measure how effective each of these measures are and which ones have proven to be effective and perhaps which ones have been proven to be less effective? Has anything been done to look at that?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, there has. I mean we would see each of these strategies as being effective because we have the data to show exactly what they are achieving but I cannot present that to you today and it is on a school-by-school basis, but each school is expected to make a record of the challenges that it is facing with young people on a pupil-by-pupil basis and we have a management information structure that runs right throughout all our schools that enables them to record incidents, to look at the focus whether it is an emotional issue, behavioural issue, to identify the resources that they need to put in to support young people and to, you know, basically be able to report on how effective their mechanisms are. Now, when we would have a school evaluation or an evaluation of an element, we would expect the school to be able to produce that data. We also have a professional partnering arrangement which we brought in about a year ago where professional partners who are based at the Department for Education, Sport and Culture will go into the schools and support but also challenge, so the question would be what are you doing to support students, you appear to have a higher than normal suspension rate, exactly what is happening here, can we see your data, can we see the strategies that you are putting in place and what evidence do you have to show that these strategies are being successful, so there is an accountability.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Going on from that, from all this research and all this data gathering you have done, what methods have you found to be very effective bearing in mind, of course, different schools of different thinking might be effected, what measures have you heard have been effective and what measures have you found to be less effective?

Ms. J. Forrest:

The key to this is maintaining a positive relationship with a student when they are having difficulties. If the staff in school can manage to do that then most structural interventions, whatever title they might have, are likely to be effective. That is the absolute key. Now that could be difficult if a student is severely trying you, so the support systems that we have got in schools, for instance behaviour managers and school counsellors, they are there for staff as well as for the students because it is absolutely key that teachers are supported so that they can draw on their professional strengths and their personal strengths even when things might be more difficult because of how a particular student is behaving. Apart from the management support you have got, there are systems of peer support, there are systems of teacher coaching, there is training within schools, there are workshops. Every school has a link to an educational psychologist so we would work together to support. Obviously schools are different but they all have their own ways of working to actively promote the maintenance of positive relationships

between the people within the school community even when the going gets tough and that is key.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Again, time is moving on. Just one question to follow on and then I am going to pass over to Deputy Tadier for the next 2 points. I do not think any of the panel - and I am sure the Minister and director and yourself - would wish to see a situation where 29 pupils, say, suffer for the behaviour of the one but there is a clear difference, I am sure we would also all agree, between someone being suspended because they are disruptive and someone being suspended when it turns out to be that they had learning difficulties or even medical issues that had not been identified whether it was Asperger's Syndrome or whatever. Are you aware of many or any incidences where students have been suspended and it has later come to light that there is a very good reason for their behaviour?

Mr. M. Lundy:

If students are suspended they would be suspended on the basis of the incident at that particular time and not whether or not they had any special needs, but quite clearly as the education psychologist said right at the outset, poor behaviour is usually a symptom of something else and it may well be something that is happening within the school or something that is happening outside the school and so you have to investigate that. You have to make sure that you are solving the right problem. As I say, the manifestation might be the behaviour but the problem may well be something else. So, yes, one has always got to be cautious about that. I know of no incidents where someone has been explicitly suspended because they have a special need or a medical need. Although I think in the U.K. medical exclusion is something that does exist as an option where a medical condition may begin to affect other pupils.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I obviously would not suggest that any of your schools would suspend because someone had a special need but I am saying can we be quite confident that the underlying issues, the real reasons, not the symptoms are found out?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes, I think we can be confident but you put your finger on the button. I mean you said, you know, effectively when you are working with one child in a class, if there are 20 in a class, 27 now, the way that you handle and manage that young person in that context is something that will affect the behaviour of others and the others will learn something about you as a classroom teacher. The challenge is where the one in the class is perhaps disrupting the education of the other 28. This is why managing an inclusion agenda is such a precarious balance because while schools wish to be inclusive, teachers also may sometimes find it very difficult to manage the behaviour of a young person in their class who is disrupting the lesson for other people. Now we have an agenda of inclusion across the Island. We do not have much in the way of alternative provision. We have resource provisions in many of our primary schools and secondary schools for children who have Aspergers et cetera and we try to make sure that they have the entitlement and access to a mainstream education. As I say, it is a precarious balance and sometimes you have to work with the pupil to keep the pupil in the school but sometimes you have to work with the school to keep the pupil in the school.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can I just come in on that one a little bit because it is something I have a little bit of experience on within my own family and the school one of my grandchildren is in? Where does the point come when a decision is made that a child is excluded rather than expelled or whatever because of a medical condition such as Aspergers where an amount of disruption ... would the parents have input into that?

Mr. M. Lundy:

There would never be a situation where the child would be expelled because they had Aspergers.

The Connétable of St. John:

No, no, no.

Mr. M. Lundy:

There might be a situation where a child was placed in a special school so, for example, if you would take Mont a l'Abbe, and that would always be through a proper assessment of need and the parents would be fully involved in that because that usually would be a situation that was, you know, apparent from very early on. So we would not expect a young person to go into a mainstream school ...

The Connétable of St. John:

No, the point I was making more so the parents of the other children whose education is being disrupted.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, that is where you have to strike the balance and that is the challenge. I mean the overall objective as I understand it and would sign up to personally is that we believe in social inclusion across the Island. If you were going to have a community society that is socially inclusive, then schools have a big part to play in that so it is difficult - and I would think you would find the teaching profession pretty divided on this one - you know, some people would say, yes, inclusion is the right thing to do, we have to work harder, we have to find strategies to support young people in mainstream education while others would take the view that, well, this is disrupting the education of some of the children who are here so it is a difficult balance to strike.

Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Mr. Lundy, I think you have answered the first point I was going to ask about whether teachers in general support the inclusion policy but it sounds like there is a mixed feeling which is probably understandable.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I would say there is a mixed feeling.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I just want to come back on one of the points that you made, you said that a child would never be expelled because they has Asperger's but I do not think that is what we are saying because children may have bad behaviour because they have got Asperger's and then they get expelled because of the bad behaviour; that is not quite the same.

Mr. M. Lundy:

They do not get expelled.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Not expelled, but they may be excluded.

Mr. M. Lundy:

There might be a suspension and the suspension would be based on the behaviour. Now, the expectation would be that if someone's behaviour was at the point where, for example, they were a danger to someone else within the school then regardless of whether or not they had a medical condition or otherwise, then it is likely that a suspension would ensue. That does not necessarily mean that everything would be left there, that that would be the end of it because the school will be working constantly on the real issue which is supporting the educational progress of the young person. If that is

being blocked because of some challenges that the young person has medically, family, otherwise, then the school has an obligation to support and work with the child to make sure that they succeed in the future.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But do you concede that splitting hairs somewhat is not? If you are saying that somebody is not being excluded because of a certain condition but if it is the only reason that they are behaving in a certain way it is because of the condition and then they go on to be excluded. It is effectively because of the illness.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I am not sure that I would be able to accept that it would be the only reason for the behaviour. There would probably be many other reasons but I think you would probably be better to talk to the behaviourist on that one.

Ms. J. Forrest:

To take your example of Asperger's, I would just like to reiterate what the director is saying is that suspensions occur because of a specific incident. So the idea that the suspension could be tied up with a particular characteristic of the child over time is not the case. Having said that, we know that children with Asperger's can find it more difficult to engage constructively with school life which is what we are trying to get all the time. We work very closely with Autism Jersey and we work to increase awareness in schools for all members of staff about what it is like to have those kind of difficulties, and there are tried and tested ways to making it easier for somebody with those kind of social communication difficulties to constructively engage in school life and enjoy it. We also work very closely with C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). We all work together to look at how best to address these kinds of issues. We have what is generally described, and certainly accepted by Autism Jersey, to be excellent provision within mainstream schools. We are additionally resourcing schools to support individuals with those kinds of difficulties. The Record of Need describes the special educational needs and determines the arrangements that the schools are going to make to address them and where that child will go to school. That is reviewed at least annually with termly monitoring meetings in between, jointly between the department, the parents and the school. So the idea is that there is a protective framework around the child who we know that we have to take more care about so everybody works together on that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sure, I think we understand that. I think the point we were just trying to make is that, first of all, you have to identify the child and if an illness or condition goes without being identified which it can do, and it is not necessarily the fault of any individual, we are only as good as the information we have. If we move on maybe to the next question, I think it does follow on largely and it is to do with the support given to students educationally during periods of suspension but I think even in the broader sense not just limited to educational support. What kind of support is given to students who may have been suspended?

Ms. J. Forrest:

In the existing policy and in the draft policy there is a requirement of schools to maintain a pupil's access to learning during the period of suspension by making arrangements with the parents so that not only is work provided but it is marked. There is a clear existing expectation which is confirmed in the new draft policy that the child's engagement with the learning that they are on will be maintained by the school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Could somebody detail how that access to learning is maintained?

Mr. M. Lundy:

If it is a short term suspension the likelihood is that the school will provide some work for the child to do at home and there is a requirement for the child to complete that and to return it when they come back to the school. I think if you go back to one of the issues that we have highlighted as a weakness in the system is that we have not necessarily communicated this clearly to parents and hopefully the new policy will clarify the parent's right in that respect so the parent has a right to expect the school to maintain contact with the child and to provide work during that short term period. If it is longer than that, then we would expect the school to be discussing with the Education Department what additional support might be necessary to keep the young person engaged with their education.

Deputy M. Tadier:

How is the work given to the student; is it done via a parent, via an email?

Mr. M. Lundy:

It could be any arrangement that would be suitable for the parent. It could be collected from the school, it could be sent to the home, it could be through electronic means, whatever really was ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Is that working effectively as far as you know?

Mr. M. Lundy:

If I were to be honest, I think that is one of the areas that we probably need to strengthen. One of the things we have done very successfully and I think this probably does set us aside from the other jurisdictions is that we make physical arrangements for the education of children at an alternative location if they are looked after. So looked after children attend if they are suspended; they are the most vulnerable children obviously and they would attend the alternative curriculum.

Ms. J. Forrest:

There are arrangements made with residential care homes if a 'looked after' child is suspended from school then we will take them to the alternative curriculum so they are educated in a specific location.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But, Mr. Lundy, you said there were improvements that could be made. Can you give us one or 2 examples?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think the first thing is to make sure that parents are aware of their rights that they can expect work to be set for a child. I think that we probably need to ensure that schools are doing that and so that would mean we need to monitor that a bit more closely.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But the improvement is ... Where is it breaking down? Is it in the sense that ...

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, I think it is breaking down at the point of communication and parents need to understand their rights in this respect so that they can quite simply say: "Okay, my child has been suspended now where is my ...". You know, you open up that degree of transparency and challenge.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Sorry, just to push in one more time, is it that the work is not being set or is it that it is being set?

Mr. M. Lundy:

There is an expectation that the work is being set. There may be individual incidents where that is not the case but if that was brought to our attention then we would take that.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I just want to pick up on that point because as has been said, a suspension is a response to an incident that just happens which might mean that the next day it is best that the child is removed from that situation for whatever reason, therefore if you are setting work for that child, how can that process work given the very small amount of time that this all occurs within?

Mr. M. Lundy:

If a young person is being suspended for a day or 2 days even at short notice, one would expect that there is ongoing work in the school that, you know, the young person could continue with. So a year tutor, for example, would be expected or a form tutor, depending on the arrangements in individual schools, might be expected on that particular day to find out from the various teachers who teach that child where the child is and what is it that the child can meaningfully do while they are home for the next day or 2 days or whatever, so that would be the process.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, but even that would be quite a lengthy process even though it is a very small amount of time.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Schools would probably see it as an onerous process, yes, but there is an expectation that they should do it.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One more final point and then I am going to move to Constable Butcher. How confident are you in the teachers having to deliver this education to pupils who are suspended? How confident are you that it is working, that they have enough resources to do that work because I would imagine the extra stretching on resources is quite phenomenal to be quite honest? You talked about arranging physical means of getting that work to them that Deputy Tadier touched on, whether it is given there in hard copy or by email, that the actual teachers ensure that it is done and give that backup that the student is also going to need; what sort of confidence have you got in that area?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I recognise that it is a challenge. I think it would be fair to say that some schools do it more successfully than others despite having processes in place that enable you to do it very quickly so you do it. I cannot say for one moment that it is something that schools would probably delight in doing. I cannot say for one moment that it does not take up additional teacher time and we recognise that our teachers work very hard but the fact of the matter is it is an expectation.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

But you are aware that some schools are managing to deliver that better than others?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I am aware that some schools have different systems for doing it, yes, and I would assume that some systems are more effective than others. We do not manage the schools but the head teachers

effectively ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Would there be a value in making that uniform though?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, we do not manage the schools for the head teachers, we place the responsibilities on the head teachers to take kind of their own context and put in procedures and processes that best meet the needs of the pupils in that context.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I do not want to push the issue but surely having a uniformed approach to delivering that has got to be good all round. I appreciate you are not trying to manage the schools for the teachers but they must know where they stand in delivering them.

Mr. M. Lundy:

If you were to look at the various secondary schools across our system, you would recognise very clearly that there are needs differences between them and the processes that may be required and work in one school may not be the processes that are required and necessarily work in another.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

What review is there, therefore, if you are saying a head teacher does this which might be appropriate to that child in that situation, it might be very effective, what process is there for that to be reviewed and fed back to other head teachers so that in the circumstances the better method could be followed?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, that is ... we have half-term meetings with head teachers and the department, and there is an opportunity in those meetings for head teachers to share practice, which is what they tend to do.

The Connétable of St. John:

What work is undertaken with students after they have been suspended, when they come back to school, to reintegrate them into the school environment and hopefully not to reoffend?

Ms. J. Forrest:

The existing policy confirmed in the draft review policy is that there has to be a formal meeting set with the parents about a child coming back to school. The period of suspension should be used for the school to review the range of arrangements that they could make to support the student in light of the fact that this is a serious concern to everybody. The re-admittance meeting is used to plan with the parents and the student what the support arrangements will be. We are actively encouraging schools and we have itemised this in the revised guidance. It is not itemised in the previous guidance but we have, all along, been encouraging schools to use processes like restorative justice, like target setting and solution-oriented approaches.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can you give us an example? How would restorative justice work in schools?

Ms. J. Forrest:

If the incident that has provoked the suspension has involved a student being physically or verbally aggressive to a teacher or another student, then restorative justice would involve them having a conversation with the person who they had aggressed and apologising for their behaviour.

The Connétable of St. John:

So it is not a rigid process per se. It is going to be very flexible, depending on the offence.

Ms. J. Forrest:

It has to be. These are individual situations where, despite all the effort that schools put in to be positive communities, we are talking about a situation where something has happened that has tested all school systems to the limit so that they have had to make a breathing space. So what that will be will be totally unique to that circumstance. To have a kind of cookbook approach to how you might support afterwards would not meet the case because of the need to maintain a positive relationship.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

If I could just follow on from Graeme's point, would you share the view that certainly when anything which is criminal ... should the police be involved, for instance, if there are assaults on teachers? Is that consistently applied if it is something like malicious damage? How is that policy put in place?

Ms. J. Forrest:

We have spent the last 18 months working with the police and the youth service on formalising and reviewing the policy regarding the relationship between the police and education establishments, and a lot of that discussion has been around this kind of issue. One of the initial questions was about bullying: where does bullying become a police matter. There is a community arm of the police who have strong links with certainly the 11 to 16 secondary schools. Police are invited members of the multi-agency support teams in each of the 11 to 16 schools. The expectation is that the relationship between the community police officer and the head teacher will be such that informal advice can be sought about when it is appropriate to formally involve the police. There is a clear expectation that should a criminal act be committed on school premises, the police will be involved in what happens next.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One final point and we will move on, but we have obviously got some very large young people. I mean, I was the size I am now when I was 15 and I have not grown since. I do not know why, but there we go. In the case of an assault, would a teacher, for instance, ever be put in a position where they would have to have a student return to the same school when that teacher has been assaulted by a student? Would that happen?

Mr. M. Lundy:

It could happen. A lot would depend on the nature of the incident: how it occurred, why it occurred, what happened and what the prognosis for a successful return would be.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Would that teacher be included in the process to decide whether that was appropriate?

Mr. M. Lundy:

They would not be included in the decision-making process, no, but they obviously would be fully aware of the situation. We would not put a teacher in that position where they had to make that decision.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I am not saying to make the decision but they would be fully informed that Pupil X who has just punched them or kicked them or whatever is going to be coming back to school. Would they be given any option? I mean, I would imagine a situation could arise where someone could not handle that sort of situation.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes, and if there was an issue with that, we try and take steps to ease the position and we would expect the management of the school to take steps to ease the position as far as that teacher is concerned. It may result in a change of class or something like that. It would not be a usual occurrence but, yes, it could happen and it has happened.

Ms. J. Forrest:

That kind of thing is very unusual. The few instances that I am aware of where there has been that kind of situation, I am not aware of a child going back to the same school in the time that I have been in the Island, but that does not mean it could not happen because, as the director said, you have to look at every circumstance in its own right.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it has happened, in actual fact.

Ms. J. Forrest:

Has it? Sorry.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Could I pass on point 9 to Deputy Tadier?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sure. Mr. Lundy - although feel free to chip in, Mr. Minister - how are suspensions monitored and have suspension figures increased over recent years and, if so, why?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes. We discussed this a little earlier before you arrived. They have increased in recent years and sometimes they show surges at particular schools. It is monitored by the department. All suspensions are required to be submitted to the department, the reasons for the suspension, the detail of the incident, the action taken. That is recorded on a database that enables professional partners at the department to challenge the schools on effectively what is happening, where the focus is. It also enables the schools, if the information has been used effectively, to identify areas which they may need to focus on. So, for example, if you had a number of suspensions and they were around something like bullying, then you would be expecting the school to focus on addressing bullying as an issue. Sometimes there are other things that the school might be focusing on. It depends what the data is throwing up. So the data is used for 2 purposes: (1) to challenge the school to make sure that arrangements and the policy that is in place is being followed and (2) to give the school information which they can learn from to help them address any broader issues that may be apparent.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Good. I think we have addressed the next point really. Can I just apologise to the panel for my late arrival. I did get held up in a personal matter this morning and I tried to convey a message but I am not sure if it got through, so my apologies for that.

Professor P. Munn:

I wonder if I could just, before we leave the statistics, ask a quick question. I was wondering whether you monitored suspension statistics against other educational outcomes, for example, like attainment and post-16 destinations.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes. Yes, we do, yes.

Professor P. Munn:

The next question is: are they throwing up interesting patterns?

Mr. M. Lundy:

They are throwing up predictable patterns on a school-by-school basis. That is as much to do with the structure of education in Jersey. As I said earlier on, you have 4 11 to 16 schools which are effectively carrying the exclusion ...

Professor P. Munn:

Inclusion in general.

Mr. M. Lundy:

[Laughter] The inclusion in general, yes, absolutely. So you would expect to see some of the attainment challenges and some of the suspension challenges arising in those schools. There is an expectation obviously that schools will drill that down to a deeper level. Again with our new valuation framework and our new professional partnering arrangement, discussions are held with schools about the data, the way they use the data and what the data is showing and what strategies they are implementing to try and manage anything that comes out of that.

Professor P. Munn:

Thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

We are really getting close to our time. Could Constable Butcher just go with the next ...?

The Connétable of St. John:

I will go on to number 12, if I may. What happens to difficult pupils in primary schools? Are the problems with this age group recorded? Are there differences between different schools, catchment areas, at this age, and are these statistics kept and how are they used?

Mr. M. Lundy:

There are differences. There are clearly differences depending on the catchment area of the school. That is inevitable. The inclusion agenda obviously is fundamental at primary school. It is very rare for a primary school child to be suspended. If a primary school child is struggling to survive in the primary school, then there is alternative provision at this point in time. We have an alternative school, St. James School. The numbers have reduced down in that particular school because it is also staffed to deliver an outreach service. So the staff of St. James will go into the primary schools and help work with teachers and the pupils in the primary school to try and ensure that the children do not have to come out of the mainstream education. So we would expect where, for example, a child is struggling in mainstream schools, some support for them. The outreach service would go in and look at the issues, try and help the teacher plan to manage the child, work with both child and the teacher to ensure that the child has a successful education. In some rare occasions, if the child is coming out of a primary school, then the school that would service that need would be St. James School.

The Connétable of St. John:

I do not think you have answered the statistic side. Do you keep records of behavioural issues within primary schools?

Mr. M. Lundy:

We do not keep records of behavioural issues in primary schools. The schools keep records of the

behaviour.

The Connétable of St. John:

Are you aware whether there has been any sort of increase in problems in primary schools?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think we are aware that teachers generally would tell us that there has been an increase in behavioural challenges across both phases: primary and secondary. Whether that is a reflection of society or not ...

The Connétable of St. John:

You do not have a split, so what you are saying is you cannot answer that question at the moment?

Mr. M. Lundy:

What I am saying is we do not maintain the detailed data of behavioural incidents at the department for each individual school. We retain a summary of suspensions. They are the issues that would most concern us. Each school is expected to have a behavioural policy, and within the context of that policy, they are expected to collect whatever data it is to give them an indication of some of the challenges that they are experiencing and also to focus the school on the things that it may need to address. So, again, if the school has got a number of bullying incidents, then that is an issue for the school. It is a broader issue than just the children. The school needs to do something to address it.

The Connétable of St. John:

Do you think though that it might be prudent for the main department to collate that sort of information from the primary schools rather than leave it in outlying areas?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, we get summary information from the primary schools. I do not think it would be practical for the department to collate behavioural incidents of children across a system with 13,000 pupils in it on a day-by-day basis, nor desirable because I think the amount of resource that we would have to put into analysing that data would not necessarily be justifiable. We do expect the schools, particularly the head teachers, to manage the situation and to bring it to our attention if there are issues that are of concern to them.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you. I want to try and get a couple of more points in before we have to throw you out of the building, as it were. There has been so much come up, I think we might have to invite you back, which I know all 3 of you will really look forward to, I am sure, will you not? No? Feel free to answer. I will pass the next one on to Deputy Maçon.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you. What is the number of instances of pupils who reach the annual limit of 15 day of suspensions, if any?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I have not got that data with me.

Ms. J. Forrest:

It is not very many. We have not got a number, but it is not a lot.

Mr. M. Lundy:

We can find that out.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We will make sure that information is provided.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Thank you.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I jump in very quickly, just on the back of the previous question? We were told that schools keep individual information or the information on individuals of any behavioural problems. Is there any mechanism for interchange of that information, for example, between primary and secondary when that student is then going up to ...?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, there is.

Deputy M. Tadier:

They would be informed of ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

There is a transition policy where educational records et cetera are passed through from primary school to secondary school.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. That is reassuring.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One final point I would like, and to be fair to you it is not on the list, but I am sure you would want to comment on it. Certainly when I was doing my professional training and education in Leicester in the U.K. suspensions and ultimately expulsions, being excluded, played a big part in league tables. I know the Minister has got strong views on league tables. How much does the suspension/exclusion issue decide your thinking that league tables are a bad idea, if that makes sense?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I do not think there is anything to dim my view about league tables. I think that ...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Can I just say, Minister, why I am asking that question, obviously we have got one school which we all know is wholly out of sync with others perhaps, and if there were league tables that would have an impact, would it not, probably?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No, I do not believe that that is the case. I think that the department has got to manage and oversee the activities of all schools, while acknowledging that each school could have different challenges. As such, we need to ensure that the schools know what our strategies and policies are and that they are being properly implemented. I think that creating league tables and publishing those league tables, perhaps more importantly, I am not convinced that would benefit anyone, whether it be the school, the pupil or the parents. We operate a policy where we are required to provide the best educational system that we can. This is one small part of that particular area and that needs to be recognised in the bigger picture.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it is not so much what would be the impact of suspensions on league tables. It would be what would be the impact of league tables on suspensions. The introduction of league tables in the U.K. over a 3-year period led to a tripling of suspensions because it was less incentive for schools to work with some of the more challenging students.

The Connétable of St. John:

I have just got one final small question, a slightly different subject we have not touched on. Regarding bullying in schools linked to suspensions, what is the current policy on that in terms of do you, if necessary, remove the bully or do you move the child who might be being bullied?

Ms. J. Forrest:

In the existing policy and the revised draft policy, there is a tariff about suspensions. The format is slightly different in the latter, but the tariff has not changed in the weightings. You will find in there the reference to the fact that severe bullying will incur a suspension. It is the bully that gets removed. However, we were talking earlier on about movements between schools and we do have cases where a parent might have a strong concern that their child is being bullied. You have to remember there are different points of view in every situation, but you may have a parent who has a strong perception that their child is being bullied in a particular school and would like them to go to another school. If our admissions officer was alerted to that, the system I referred to earlier would kick in, that our educational psychologist and educational welfare officer would get involved if they were not already. Quite often they are, so we would be working to resolve the issue because it is known that pupils subject to bullying, if they transfer schools, may well be subject to bullying again because it is a situation you have to look at in the round.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

To just touch on that point, and we really have to end because we need 10 minutes before our next interview, you talked about how the bully would be removed. In the final analysis with a disruptive pupil for whatever reason, how is the decision to suspend balanced out between, say, the 29 pupils who may be suffering and the one student who is causing a problem? Where do you come down on? Is it always the 29? You know, that decision that you have got to take a student out of the classroom, how does that ...

Mr. M. Lundy:

It is primarily based on the incident. I mean, the first thing is that if a student is a risk to other students and staff, then quite clearly that student will be suspended. Occasionally a student will be suspended to give a very strong message to the student that whatever the behaviour is at that point in time, although it may not be a risk to other people, that is not acceptable, but of course you would expect that to be the last resort after the school had tried a number of other things. So then, after that, you would take a view if this is happening regularly, a young person is disrupting the education of others quite frequently, then you would have to take a view to some sort of alternative provision. The alternate provision may be within the school ... it has got a learning support unit ... or it may be outside the school if it is deemed through assessment that the pupil's needs would be better met somewhere else.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Okay. I really would love to continue. It has been very informative. I am sure we probably disagree on some matters but I would just like to thank all 3 of you for coming, unless there is anything else that you would like to clarify.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would just like to make a couple of general comments. First of all, I acknowledge that we are focused on school suspensions. However, this is only one small part of managing behaviour and supporting our

young people within the schools. Quite rightly, we have a responsibility for children. However, there is also balance, and the balance is that parents equally are required to take responsibility for their children. Furthermore, we are committed, and have been for some time, to what I would call the early intervention programmes. I think you will see within our draft policies on suspensions that the aim is to deal with children in a positive manner to avoid the issues and the ultimate sanction which is a suspension. This is something that we generally desire to progress. It is something that has been picked up in other reviews, including the Williamson review, and I believe that if we want to minimise the issues that eventually arrive at suspensions, it is that sort of effort and that sort of programme where we will see the greatest benefit. Thank you.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Thank you. I will end the session there. Thank you, everyone, for attending. We will have a 10-minute break and then we will start again with the next interview.