

**2.6 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning regarding funding for the Island's schools (OQ. 109/2025):**

Will the Minister advise whether the funding for the Island's schools is expected to remain within budget for this year, and what actions, if any, he considers should be taken to ensure that funding allocated to schools is sustainable in the longer term?

**Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central (The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. The funding allocated to schools is the budget; therefore, it will remain within budget for the year. In terms of longer-term sustainability, I do thank the Deputy for the question here because it is important that we have a longer-term conversation - as demographics change but need increases - so that school funding is protected during that time. Of course, there will be the usual process of business cases and growth funding consideration as we go through each Council of Ministers. I would say, for every Minister previous to me and way beyond me, this will be an issue that they will need to push for in terms of protection of budget and the changing nature of schools, which I fully recognise. There are real challenges into the future.

**2.6.1 Deputy J. Renouf:**

It has been reported that in the last 5 years, expenditure and staff numbers have gone up by 30 per cent above inflation, roughly. Does the Minister accept these figures and, if I understand him correctly, does he think that education spending still has to rise further to correct historic underfunding?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I cannot tell you off the top of my head whether that 30 per cent in the reporting is entirely accurate. Of course, the costs have gone up because numbers have increased in terms of schools, particularly in the area of special educational needs. For example, there are many more teaching assistants that are employed and that are increasingly skilled and quite rightly being paid appropriately for those skills and providing real service in our schools. In terms of funding for education, I do believe that funding will need to increase because of the increasing need. An example is in 2017 - and I do know some figures off the top of my head - there were 212 children on a Record of Need. Now I have just forgotten the accurate figure for the second one, but currently there are 519 or 539 - I will look it up and I am sure the Deputy will be fine with the ballpark figure - more than doubling of that type of need. The Record of Need rightly comes with a significant amount of funding once that has been recognised, and a significant amount of support that is needed within schools. So, those demands will push up the cost of education. But I will say here, and I say repeatedly, that everything we spend on education is an investment into the future of our Island.

**2.6.2 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North:**

The States Employment Board agreed pay awards above inflation for teachers, and I just want to know whether the Minister is confident that the additional expenditure that has been agreed will be within the agreed budgets for 2025 and 2026.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I can reassure the Deputy that the pay increase was funded separately from school budgets; so that increase was funded. What we hear in social media is not always true; I will just make that point.

**2.6.3 Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

There have been several deficits reported in the media across some of the Island's primary and secondary schools. I just want to know why is it that these overspends exist, and what actions are being taken to address those incidents?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just check with the Deputy whether he means previous deficits at end of year or forecast deficits? Because they are 2 completely different things.

**Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Yes, it was what was reported in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* several days ago and that was the forecast.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Part of the problem was that those 2 things were merged together. A school is a very complex organism and has many challenges throughout the years; and we have a number of different schools. In previous years, those so-called deficits have been addressed from the overall budget by the end of the year. Forecasts are very difficult and that is one of the reasons why I think publishing forecasts is very challenging. First, it pits one school against another. Second, it does not really give an accurate position of where we will be at the end of the year; it is a snapshot at that time. There can be challenges. For example - and I will say to the Deputy - if a school has 20 young people on a Record of Need, they will have a completely and significantly different challenge to address in that year than others. We have to adapt to those challenges and we have to try and support as best we can. I think I have answered the question.

#### **2.6.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:**

The Minister has talked about some of the drivers of why budgets have increased, but could he say how much the education budget has increased over the last 5 years?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I will have to get back to the Deputy; I am afraid that is not a figure I have held in my head. I hope the Deputy is okay with that. I can answer that in writing if that is okay.

#### **2.6.5 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

I thank the Minister to get back to me. My second question is: if there is an increase, is the Minister concerned about this increase and concerned that he will not be able to find that money going forward? If so, does he intend to review the school funding formula or the way in which funding is allocated to schools? Will he consider this going forward?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I think any Minister sensibly would have concerns about funding into the future and would want to protect and increase their funding. I am pretty sure any Minister would stand up and say they want more funding for their department, and quite rightly. I have mentioned before that need is increasing and therefore we have to be cognisant of that and we have to address it. In terms of the school funding formula, I am sure it will change as we move forward because it is an iterative process. Given that the funding formula is published, we have never been so transparent in the way in which schools are funded in every single different area. Now, within that funding formula some things will increase, some will decrease; I think the ability to respond is exactly what is needed in the funding formula. I mention again the Record of Need simply because it is on my mind that the funding for Records of Need has increased in the school funding formula in recognition of that need. Yes, we will have challenges into the future, but also - if I may just take a second longer on this answer - there is also a huge opportunity for us as demographics change. There will be opportunity to maintain funding and use that funding more effectively across our school estates, and not simply do the numbers game in terms of how many people are there.

#### **2.6.6 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:**

What does the Minister have to say to the leader of the teaching union who said that: "For the Government to agree to a 2024 pay rise and then not to fund schools to make up for this, it is outrageous", as was reported in the press?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I simply do not think that is what happened; I believe it was funded. I think it was the right thing to do because we had teachers on strike, we had children not at school, we had a very expensive situation and money was being wasted having to deal with other areas. We are still picking up the pieces for that relationship. I would say to whatever union leader that is to come and talk directly to myself because I think that would be a much more constructive conversation rather than third party through the media.

**2.6.7 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Can the Minister confirm when the pay rise was agreed for the teachers? Did C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) ... did the Minister receive additional funding from the Treasurer and it was passed to schools? Or did schools need to fund the pay rise within their budgets?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I believe that the funding was passed to schools. If that is not the case and the Deputy knows something I do not, then I would like to address that, absolutely. But yes, I believe the additional funding for the pay rise was passed to schools.

**2.6.8 Deputy D.J. Warr of St. Helier South:**

I will come back to some more reporting in the press. There is concern made by Victoria College representatives that the 47:53 per cent split, which had been approved by the States Assembly in 2017, was no longer being correctly applied. Would the Minister like to comment on that commentary?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, be careful what you read in the press. I believe that that - it was a States decision - is still applied. The A.W.P.U., as it is called - the average weighted pupil unit - applies to the fee-paying schools. There is discussion at the moment to move to the funding formula and what that would mean and what that would look like into the future, which may be a very positive thing because we have much more clarity. I am afraid we do have to have further discussions on that situation, and I think it is around some specific areas. But no, the 47 per cent is maintained.

**2.6.9 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:**

Can the Minister outline the roles and responsibilities of the trustees and governors when it comes to setting budgets and overseeing spend?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I thank the Deputy for his question. Governing bodies have a really important role to play, particularly around school funding and monitoring spend. It is a very difficult job on a governing body and subsequently we are - in fact, the first meeting is in 2 weeks' time - to talk to governing bodies about the new ... much more clarity in what their roles are. We have put something together and some work has been going on over the last few months to go very clearly through the areas of decision-making, roles and responsibilities, monitoring, accountability and the stakeholder voice for governing bodies. Following that will be a formal day of training to help back governing bodies in their role. So yes, they have a very important role, and I would thank all of those who give up their time for the governing bodies. It is really important we support governing bodies to know what their role is in holding headteachers to account in a positive but effective way.

**2.6.10 Deputy T.A. Coles:**

Does that mean that the governing bodies are the first point of accountability for school budgets or does it sit with the headteachers or you as the Minister?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I thank the Deputy because that is a very good question. It would be the headteacher who is the main person responsible for the budget, but yes, the governing bodies do have an important role in monitoring spend. However, as I have said, I think more support is needed for governing bodies to enable them to do that job as effectively as possible. That support is actively happening at the moment, and I am very

pleased to see it happening. But then ultimately, all of the budget is my responsibility; of course it is. We will do our best to maintain good practice and the effective use of money from the Education budget.

**2.6.11 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:**

Would the Minister agree that the pay increases have had an impact on the current financial position, and can he confirm that these are now fully funded? If not, is this likely to lead to an increase in the overspend even more so, and if so, what will he do about this?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I think I have already answered the question about whether they were funded. Do they have an increase? Yes, they do; a positive effect, because what we have done is solve a dispute. We have a 3-year deal so that we do not face disputes in the next 3 years, which I believe will help maintain staffing, will give some consistency from staff, and in the long term will save money simply because we are not going through so much transience in staff and poor relationships within our education system. But the pay rise was agreed for the right reasons, funded, and I fully back it.

**2.6.12 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

I think there is something about balancing the books as well as addressing the industrial relations issues. I wondered, given that there are still some outstanding issues relating to finalising terms and conditions which were promised, what plans he has to fund any additional expense that these may incur, and whether this increases the risk to the budget even further?

[10:45]

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, that is absolutely right. The move in terms and conditions, particularly in making more time for teachers to do their job and to plan and mark, for example, is going to have a cost; that is one of the challenges we face. Overall funding - yes, of course, that will increase the overall funding need. It is one of the many challenges that we have in school. But if we are going to have an education system where staff feel valued, where staff feel that they can do their job effectively and professionally, where they can be paid enough to stay on our Island and live here, and where children get the best possible opportunity in education, that will cost money. That is the difficult but honest conversation we have to have across Government, across this Assembly and across our society. You cannot get something that you are not going to pay for. If you want the best, you have to put the money up to get the best. That is the discussion that we now have to have. There was another part to the question I think I missed; sorry, that is me going on.

**Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

It was to ask the Minister whether he was of the view that additional risks would be presented through finalising the terms and conditions that were promised, and how he intends to fund those. This is not an everlasting pot of money and it is about balancing the books, so how does he plan to balance the books?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

You can answer briefly because we are a little behind this morning.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I do not think the way to balance books is to cut teachers' pay. It was tried before, some years ago, with N.Q.T.s' (newly qualified teachers) pay and the effect of that, 5 or 6 years on, was that we were losing staff hand and fist. It did not work then; it will not work now. But yes, of course we need to find ... it is not massive amounts of money that we have to find and we have to be flexible with trade unions. But as I have said with the trade unions in a very open discussion, it is the first time ever we are talking about how we are going to get P.P.A. (planning, preparation and assessment) time increased and not whether we will. I think that is a really significant change in the discussion.

**2.6.13 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf of St. Saviour:**

I wanted to clarify whether or not the Minister is going to stand by his statement that the latest pay increase, all of it, was fully funded. If he is not quite right in relation to that, would he come back to the Assembly? Because I think there is some uncertainty in relation to the base level estimate of funding and the future funding, which may give parents some concern.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, of course I would. The focus on pay rises is unfortunate. I know that the Deputy was in a Government that seemed to be happy to have industrial action; I am not.

**Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

With the greatest of respect, my late civil partner was a teacher and I know teachers; I think it is rather not right. I would ask him to withdraw that suggestion.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sir, the last Government sent a letter to teachers about the pay dispute and I think I am absolutely accurate.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I do not think this means that you can have a free-for-all. You need not withdraw the remark.

**2.6.14 Deputy P.F.C. Ozouf:**

I would be grateful if the Minister would come back to the Assembly, perhaps before the end of the sitting, and kindly confirm - because I know that he would be concerned about it and parents would be concerned about it and journalists in the media are going to be all over us - the extent to which the pay rise that was agreed by the Council of Ministers - the new one - was fully funded or not, and what impact that is going to have on schools. It would just be helpful for clarity.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I do believe the pay rise agreed was fully funded for schools. The funding issues that have been going through the press and filled a number of column inches are around many other areas in the complexity of schools. They have conflated a number of different issues around S.E.N. (special educational needs), around costs for schools, around employment, et cetera. But to point to the pay rise as the reason for that is simply, I believe, not the case. We have been through this a number of times now, so I think I am going to be clear on that.

**2.6.15 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:**

Does the Minister accept that agreeing the terms and conditions for teachers is also a vital part of improving the overall package and the experience that teachers have while delivering their excellent experience and care to our children?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I do agree with the Deputy. As somebody who was teaching and a head of department, I knew how challenging it was for staff. I knew how much commitment they gave to their job, the hours put in, and the energy that was given. That will, of course, be a challenge. There is a combination of factors with any workforce: the conditions in which they are working, the value that they are given, and the monetary value they are given, because they have to live on the Island as well. So yes, of course they are, and we are trying to do the best we can with those elements.

**2.6.16 Deputy K.L. Moore:**

When does the Minister expect to have that funded solution agreed with teachers?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Money will have to go into the Government Plan for next year. If we can trial in some schools to see the best effective use of money before that, we will do so. But that is one of the issues that we have to face. I think the earliest time will be from January 2026. I know that is in the middle of a school year,

but I do believe that if headteachers are given the opportunity to make P.P.A. time from January, I am sure they will find a way because they know how important it is for their staff. We have to look as best we can and we have to get something in place and certain before the next election, because change inevitably will come, but we need to give some certainty to the workforce before that time.

**2.6.17 Deputy J. Renouf:**

Does the Minister accept that, as reported, school budgets for this year are under pressure? If so, to help clarity - and he has spoken a lot about the fact that there has been confusion - will the Minister publish an analysis of spending in education over the last few years, so that we can understand the additional costs that he has mentioned, whether the increased funding over the last few years has met those challenges, and therefore whether additional funding is really justified?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, school budgets are under pressure. Of course they are; they have been for many years. In terms of an analysis of school funding, I think it has been in every single Government Plan for the last few years, so it can be found. I will give an example of the pressures that schools face. I think it was 2022, 2023; the N.A.S.E.N. (National Association for Special Educational Needs) report was published about special education needs in schools. That generated a recognised need for I think it was £13.1 million; what was actually agreed by Council of Ministers was £6 million. The in-built deficit in what was needed has now, lo and behold, come to roost to some extent. That is not a criticism of anything before; it is an observation. If we take those intelligent observations and look forward, we can have a much more considered, thoughtful and honest discussion about what is actually needed for the education system that we all want. I hope that we can all have that discussion and we can move forward in a positive way.