

States Greffe

Deputy Robert Ward
Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

BY EMAIL

8th May 2025

Dear Minister

Follow-up matters from the Public Hearing on 7th May 2025

Thank you for attending the quarterly public hearing yesterday, together with the Assistant Minister and your Officers, your time is much appreciated. During the hearing commitments were provided to follow up with:

- Confirmation of whether the costs of locum Educational Psychologists for the period 2021 – 2025 is salary only, or if the quoted figures include travel costs and other expenses.
- Confirmation of the number and location of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) in secondary schools.
- Further details of when more information will be made available about the use of zero hours contracts in schools and examples of their use, if possible.
- Details about the data collection being used to track the progress of 14+ movers and comparing their GCSE results and post-GCSE destinations.
- With regards to the headteacher secondments to support CYPES leadership, what is the total additional cost associated with backfilling leadership roles in schools?
- An update on any work underway by Government to help identify any unregistered children who are not in formal education.
- Any data from the Early Years pilots (to be shared in confidence, if required).
- Further detail about the capital building work due to commence at Highlands College.

As we came to the end of the time allocated for the hearing you agreed to respond to the Panel's additional queries in writing, and I set these out below, for your attention:

Violence in schools

1. Freedom of Information data shows a fivefold rise in violence against school staff since 2021, with 18 Emergency Department attendances in 2024. What are the root causes of this rise, and how are you addressing them?
2. Will you publish anonymised school-level incident data to improve transparency and allow school communities to understand local risks?
3. What practical support has been introduced for teachers and teaching assistants who face aggression, beyond amending job descriptions for example, de-escalation training or injury leave policies?

4. Is there evidence that statutory testing periods such as SATs contribute to a spike in behavioural incidents, and will your department consider adjusting staffing or timetables accordingly?

Early Years Plan

5. Minister, you've previously stated that a 'readiness assessment' will inform the implementation timeline for the universal 2–3-year-old offer. Could you now clarify what the threshold criteria are such as staffing availability, provider capacity, and funding envelope that must be met to trigger implementation?
6. Sector stakeholders have flagged workforce pay gaps between government-led pilots and private provision. How will you address the risk that enhanced government-funded settings draw staff away from private nurseries, and will you publish comparative pay data to support a sector-wide workforce strategy?
7. Minister, *[in your letter to the Panel on 24th March]* you've cited the role of both the Best Start Partnership survey and the parent survey commissioned for 2025. Can you commit to publishing a clear decision trail showing how these findings directly influence funding rates, ratio decisions, and capacity targets in the next Government Budget?
8. You noted that all but one private provider surveyed expected to remain viable over the next 12 months. What specific financial or regulatory contingencies are in place if those forecasts change, particularly if uptake shifts significantly towards state-funded settings after the universal offer is launched?

Lifelong Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships

9. What share of the 1,656 Skills Development Fund enrolments since April 2025 were focused on core basic skills literacy, numeracy and digital and how will you expand that share in 2026?
10. Is the £2,000 employer incentive for apprenticeships new funding or a repackaging of a previous scheme, and what retention conditions apply to avoid misuse?
11. How are you measuring the return on investment for each pound spent through the Skills Development Fund specifically in terms of qualifications achieved and wage progression?

Other queries

12. Please could you update the Panel on the current status of any plans to upgrade the sports facilities at Le Rocquier School, including any recent developments or decisions we should be aware of?
13. Please could you provide the Panel with an update on the current policy for EpiPens and auto-adrenaline injectors in schools, particularly regarding staff training, the availability of spare devices on site, and any recent or planned improvements to emergency medical protocols?

Thank you in advance for your assistance. The Panel looks forward to your formal response and would request that this is received by **Friday 16th May 2025**.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Curtis', written in a cursive style.

Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel