States of Jersey
States Assembly



États de Jersey
Assemblée des États

Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Proposed Budget 2027-2030

Witness: The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Monday, 2nd November 2026

Please note this transcript has not yet been reviewed for factual accuracy. It is currently undergoing a verification process, during which Ministers and relevant departments are invited to check and confirm the accuracy of the information presented. A final, fact-checked version will be published once this process is complete. In the meantime, readers should treat this transcript as a draft and be aware that factual accuracy corrections may follow.

Panel:

Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North (Chair)

Connétable M.A. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine of St Mary, St Ouen and St Peter

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence

Witnesses:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central, The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. K. Posner, Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.

Mr. J. Williams, Programme Director, Education Reform

Ms. R. Baxter, Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education

Ms. A. Homer, Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.

[12:31]

Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North (Chair):

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. This is the public hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel as part of our review of the Proposed Budget 2027-2030. Today is Monday, 2nd November, and our witness is the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.. I am Victoria Li, Deputy for St. Helier North, and I chair this panel. Before we begin, a few housekeeping points. This hearing is being filmed and streamed live, and the recording and the transcript will be published on the States Assembly website. Please make sure all the mobile phones and devices are switched to silent. Any members of the public, if they are watching online, are very welcome. For the recording and the transcript, please state your name and role the first time you speak, and stay close to the microphone. I will now ask my panel colleagues to introduce themselves, followed by the Minister, Assistant Minister and officers. We have received apologies from Connétable Curtis of St. Saviour, who is unable to join us today. If any Members have an additional interest to declare, please do so when you introduce yourself. Today we want to understand how the proposed Education budget translates into those outcomes. We are interested not only in what funding is being allocated but in what that investment will achieve; whether it improves attainment, attendance, inclusion, well-being, opportunities for children and young people for our Island, and their readiness for adult life. The Budget proposes significant investment in education and related services over the coming year. Every figure represents a policy choice, and every choice has consequences for children, families, schools, and the wider community. So our focus today is therefore on how spending decisions support the Government's education priorities, how success will be measured, and how Ministers will demonstrate value for money alongside improved outcomes. I will ask my panel colleagues to introduce themselves now, and then we will get back to our questions.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair):

My name is Connétable Mark Labey of the Parish of Grouville, and I am the vice-chair of this panel.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine of St. Mary, St Ouen and St Peter:

Hello, I am Deputy Chris Rebindaine, Deputy for St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, and member of the panel.

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence:

I am Tina Palmer, Constable for St. Lawrence, and a member of the panel.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Catherine Curtis. I am the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, I am the Assistant Minister.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I am Keith Posner. I am the Interim Chief Officer in C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Anne Homer. I am Head of Finance Business Partnering for C.Y.P.E.S.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
Rachel Baxter, Associate Director, Policy and Strategy for Education.

Programme Director, Education Reform:
Jonathan Williams, Programme Director, Education Reform.

Acting Committee and Panel Officer:
I am Kaya Camara, Acting Committee and Panel Officer.

Supporting Researching and Project Officer:
I am Rosalyn Sharp, the Supporting Research and Project Officer for the panel.

Communications Support:
Emily Thomas, Communications Support:

Deputy V. Li:
Thank you very much. We have quite a lot of questions to cover today so we are trying to make sure that we will try to cover as wide as possible. But it comes with detailed numbers, and we will always follow up with questions. Shall we begin now? Thank you. Minister, your department has one of the largest budgets across the Government. What are the 3 most significant improvements for learners that this budget is intended to deliver by 2030, and how will each be measured?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Thank you. I think our estimated spend for this 2027 is £193.7 million. I think that is slightly less than half of what was spent on Health. So it is a large budget. You asked about the 3 significant improvements to learning?

Deputy V. Li:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is an awful lot that goes on in this department around learning. So to pick out 3 things, I am just trying to think. One of the big ones is around inclusion. As you know, we had the S.E.N.D. (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) review last year, and we are going through all the follow-up from that review. I think that will certainly improve the situation greatly. So we have got that one. Then when we look at further and higher education, we have got the new campus that we are working towards, which will also, I think, really revitalise a lot of things in Jersey; not just around education, but more as well. Another significant improvement over the next few years will be changes involved because of demographics. We have to look at all the schools as they are and how they work, what we start with and what needs changing because of falling numbers, how we do that best, and as we are making any changes we can bring in improvements at the same time. So I suppose those are 3 significant areas, and there are probably others which I have forgotten to mention, but that is certainly 3 of them.

Deputy V. Li:

How are you going to measure the inclusion?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have got outcomes, how we measure that already. Certainly, because there was the S.E.N.D. review and there is a sort of framework around how that is progressed, I cannot remember the word at the moment for ... it is the priorities, is it not? The priorities. So we look at how the priorities are being achieved in the different schools and there are also other outcomes, which I can just look up, and unless somebody else wants to come in on this one because ...

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

One thing I would say is the Minister will be bringing forward in the new year a list of activities in response to the inclusion review. Immediate priorities have already been published, but this will be followed up with some more detailed actions and activities that will form the inclusion element of the education reform programme. So in terms of your question about how there is improvement for outcomes for young people, the delivery of those actions within that programme, which we will be bringing forward in the new year, will be one of them. There will also be a number of indicators that we already measure. For example, we look at attendance, we look at attainment of different groups of learners; so within that space we would see improvement there as well. There is also, for example, Voice of the Learner, Voice of the Parent, in terms of understanding whether the changes that sit under the education reform programme in the inclusion space are actually making a tangible difference.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

And of course we have got the school review framework, which is going into the schools, and assessing how well they are doing, which also includes how well they are doing with inclusion too, which is published so everyone can see that as well.

Deputy V. Li:
Then you talked about the demographics. Is there any specific measurement that you are going to put into that priority?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Demographics, of course, we have already got a huge amount of data about the changing numbers of children coming to schools, how this will affect each year as they go through the schools. Sorry what was the question again?

Deputy V. Li:
Because I asked about how do you measure each of the important significant improvements.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Around the demographics?

Deputy V. Li:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
This is something that we are responding to and it is quite a complex thing to do, but it requires a lot of discussion with the headteachers as well, so it is not just directed from within department. How we measure that, it is something we are working on now. How would we measure that? We have to respond to changing numbers. This is what we are doing.

Deputy V. Li:
Thank you very much. What were the most significant spending pressures in developing this Budget and which of them does this Budget leave unresolved?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We have got, of course, quite a lot required for the new campus that we will be working on, and moving ahead more quickly now is the Mont à l'Abbé school extension. So capital projects of course require a lot of funding, but we are very happy that that is going ahead. The school financing as it is for business as usual takes an awful lot of funding because we are very heavily dependent on staff, and that is where most of our payments go; staff. I think it is about 84 per cent. So the funding

is generally for business as usual to support the schools and to support the early years and further and higher education, and then because there are the capital projects as well.

Deputy V. Li:
I think in our last public hearing, we were told that the measurable outcomes were already in place for each priority. Then the figures on the school deficits and on persistent absence among Jersey Premium pupils would follow, but I think we have not had that follow-up yet. Would that be possible to have that data for us?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Yes. Sorry.

Deputy V. Li:
Thank you. Understanding that there are ... I think it is, again, one of the things with the department, because we know this is a very service-focused department. We will go through the staffings later, we will have some more questions to ask you later. What part of the Common Strategic Policy objective on lifelong learning is not funded in this Budget?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
At the moment, because we are working through the priorities and the follow-up from the inclusion programme, we can cover what needs to be spent. But then we may need extra funding at some point towards inclusion. So we will be working on that at the moment. For any other areas, I think the Budget generally covers what we need to do, so we are quite confident about how we go ahead with everything. We have the feasibility - I think it was £5 million to go ahead with the campus - so can move forward in what we are planning to do quite well, but there will be some issues that need perhaps more funding as time goes on. As we all know, there is a problem now with climate change and overheating in buildings, so we are going to be needing to do some more work around addressing the overheating in schools.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Probably as well in the lifelong learning space around apprenticeships. The Minister has an ongoing review of apprenticeships, so there may be a requirement in 2028 to bring forward proposals for additional funding in that space.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There are certain things we are working on for some more funding in the next Budget, but currently we are okay to continue with what we are planning.

[12:45]

Deputy V. Li:

Which budget measures directly support the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Priority), priority 5, which is to increase the provision of lifelong learning? I understand that you were discussing about there was some kind of review on the inclusion for lifelong learning specifically, and also the funding for the Highlands campus. But this one is to increase the provision of lifelong learning.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are doing a huge amount of work on this at the moment. In fact just before coming here we were discussing this in a short meeting; another one. The last panel published a review around lifelong learning, and we are working our way through every recommendation in that review and progressing what works well. There are a lot of improvements going on. There is a lot of good work done already but there are more improvements we can make. For example, we expect to have that portal up and running very soon, and this includes how apprenticeships are funded as well. The work is ongoing at the moment; it has been for the last few months.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. Now we are going to go into a little bit more details about the lifelong learning and skills development.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Chair. Minister, following a recent letter to the panel where you referenced existing performance measures and Island outcomes, what specifically would success look like for lifelong learning by 2030?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is a good question. What I would like is for everybody to be able to do the training that they need and they want to do. We have got to make sure that ... the most important thing is to remove any barriers to people wanting to access any sort of skills or learning. We are currently looking at student finance as well. I know that in our legacy report from the last panel we did recommend that this new panel might want to do a review of higher education and higher education funding. So we are just addressing shortfalls where the thresholds have not been updated at the moment, to ensure that families can manage to send their children away to do a degree, if that is what they all want to do. I cannot really think of what else to say at the moment because there is so much of it. So I do not know if anyone wants to add to that.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I think in terms of success was the question, was it not? Yes. Certainly, more pathways for young people and opportunities to do different qualifications. We have to keep an eye on changes to qualifications from the U.K. (United Kingdom), and make sure that we are ready. I think by the end of this term, we need to be in a strong position. I think as well, a recognition of the importance of that vocational pathway as a really good choice for young people is going to be a sign of success within this space. We have touched on apprenticeship funding, but a greater range of apprenticeships for those people wanting to study and work that is aligned with the needs of the economy and the skills required on the Island as well. So I guess the number and type and then uptake of those apprenticeships would be another sign. There are a bunch of things within this space that we would need to develop specific indicators for, but it is within those areas.

The Connétable of Grouville:

How will progress be reported publicly? Because the panel clearly would like to make sure that everybody is aware of this. How will it be reported publicly?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have got the education reform programme, which we are going to be completing by around January next year, which provides the vision for what we are doing in Education. So that will be really important. Then, of course, there will be a lot of public information goes out around that. I have already mentioned the portal which will have everything that people need to know about anywhere, where they can study and what they can study. We will just make these things public as they are complete, and the panel will be able to ask us about them.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What evidence is available regarding skills shortages across Jersey's economy?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think this is still collected by the Economics Department but with the help of Skills Jersey. Skills Jersey does all the work on this as well, and we get the regular updates from that and have meetings to discuss where there might be shortfalls and the way to respond to that. So in the last meeting, for example, there was scaffolding training with something that was ... there was a shortage of, which was needed because of new standards coming in, I think it was. I have got the figures here. We had 18. Yes, so for example, the shortages identified at the time - this is of course going back a year - was historic building maintenance. There was a 2-year training programme for that, supported by the skills development scheme; data analysis and science skills at BDO for a one-year course; the Scaffolding Training Academy for 2 years; low-carbon technicians; and that one I went up to speak to the apprentices just recently. It is really good. Specialist healthcare skills, and I think that is it. There was also the COMPASS traineeship pilot, which is across all industry sectors for studying

towards a level 3 C.M.I. (Chartered Management Institute) certificate in leadership and management with 12 delegates. I have got the numbers, so I could go through the numbers or we can send them to you, it is up to you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, that is fine. My next question has been answered, so thank you, Minister. My final question in this section is, what is the current N.E.E.T.? Now, you know me and acronyms. I will explain that to those who are listening. N.E.E.T. means not in employment, education, or training, individuals that are not in any of those. How does the N.E.E.T. rate, and what reduction are you aiming for by 2030?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

First of all, the young people who are N.E.E.T.s, we only know about them if we know about them. There will be quite a number of young people who perhaps are not in education or training and do not need income support perhaps, and so we do not know what those numbers are. For any numbers we do have ...

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

We will be able to provide you with some outline figures. In terms of the direction, certainly we would want to reduce the N.E.E.T. figure, of course - that is central to what the Minister is trying to achieve here - and that would form one of those indicators that I mentioned earlier. So when we get to the point of publishing that we will come back and explain how we have got that figure, and then obviously we would need to be publicising progress against that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I was just going to say though, if you look at our data we do collect from the young people who finished their course at Highlands, a very high number go on to employment or further training, so it certainly does not look like an issue from that position.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Can I just clarify, if we are not really sure what the number is, how are we going to monitor and measure if we have made any improvements?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have to go by what data we can collect.

Deputy V. Li:
Have you got the budget for collecting the data?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
We do that internally with the measurements we have got. I think what the Minister is saying is that the span in terms of making sure we capture every young person who is need is a bit more challenging.

Deputy V. Li:
Because I think one of the things we would hear, they are falling into the category of N.E.E.T.s. Before that, we also need to look at their school mobilities. Are they transferred to different schools? Then all those data will be collected to actually give us much bigger and broader understanding.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I take your point, yes. In terms of making sure that we are all joined up across all different paths, which is why it can be quite difficult to do.

Deputy V. Li:
Yes. We are going to move to further and higher education emphasis.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Some of these questions you have alluded to some of the answers already, so apologies if I repeat some of them. How exactly will the new campus increase the lifelong learning participation, rather than simply relocating existing provision?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think that it is going to just revitalise everything. We can also work on the branding for University College Jersey and for the further education campus as well. That is quite a big piece of work that we need to do and to build on the good reputation that is already there but to build on that. There will be the ability to provide more courses than currently because we are quite constrained with the current building. So we will be able to do an awful lot more. We can have possibly the shopfront-type idea to promote what is going on inside. It will provide a very big opportunity, I think, for lifelong learning generally.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I appreciate we have spoken a lot about skills, but obviously what will happen to the adult and community education piece, the provision there, the A.C.E. provision?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The night classes and so on?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There would not be any reason for that not to continue.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
That will stay where it is potentially?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
You say stay where it is in its current physical ...?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Based for a little bit more.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
That would be all part of the feasibility study to find what we would do with those ancillary buildings, but certainly it has an absolute strong place in delivery.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
It has got a nice revenue stream as well, has it not?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
But it is massively important for the community.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, absolutely.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
So we want that to go from strength to strength as well. We often talk about the young people in this, but that is a major part for any development of the campus.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Part of the lifelong learning.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Exactly.

Deputy V. Li:
So a few courses that you mentioned earlier were delivered by not Highlands College specifically, but was delivered by private stakeholders. What you were saying just now is that you are going to extend the provision and also spend the provision of the further education when you have the new campus ready, because that sounds to me is that you want to have the new courses to be delivered in the campuses. Have you spoken with those partnerships? Are they going to be extended or are they going to be merged into the current offering?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
A new campus provides an opportunity to have closer alignment with community partners, to which some of those organisations are either delivering courses out of a new community facility or continuing to deliver from wherever they deliver. Highlands delivers the vast majority of courses but it does not deliver all of them, and we have to be absolutely aware of that. The development of a new campus provides those additional opportunities for other providers to either access those facilities and have more up-to-date modern facilities to deliver from or we continue with the current arrangements that we have with them. So there are certainly lots of possibilities.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I just mentioned before one of the training opportunities was provided by BDO. That company, for example, works extremely closely with Highlands. This is not about not keeping ... welcoming these businesses to be involved. It is about having more opportunities to work with them as well.

Deputy V. Li:
Because one of the things you mentioned that I think was with J.T. (Jersey Telecom), the sustainable ... one of the courses you were mentioning.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The J.E.C. (Jersey Electricity Company)?

Deputy V. Li:
J.E.C., yes. So the things that whether J.E.C. will carry on to providing those coursework in their own premises or Highlands College is going to have the premises designed for those courses. That is my question.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Currently it is based at Highlands College, which the J.E.C. has funded. Like I said, it is a matter of working together with the different organisations and considering what works best.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
And cost effective.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I know that there has been a lot of talk about the college, but for the sake of people listening to this publicly, what options were assessed before pursuing a new campus? What feasibility studies have been done and what needs to be delivered and where is the best location? But I am probably pre-empting before you have done the feasibility study.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There has been a lot of ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
You mentioned £5 million.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, and there has been a lot of mention of the town location, but that is just because it seems to give the best opportunities. It does not tie us down to a town location. It is something when discussing with a lot of businesses and other organisations that thought would be best as well. So probably that is the best thing to do, to have a town location, but it is not an absolute definite. The feasibility will be there to go through all these points and evaluate them, that is what it is for. So that is what we will be working on over the next year.

[13:00]

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The public can look out for being able to have some input into that feasibility, which is perfect.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
It is probably just worth saying, there has been a huge amount of work that has gone into this over a number of years, which I am sure you would appreciate.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
It has been around for a while.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
So there have been assessments made of the current campus and buildings. There has been pre-feasibility work done when the college appeared in earlier iterations of the capital programme, so that is not wasted at all for moving forward. There has been an updated pre-feasibility work. When I say "pre", that is really early stages thinking. But as you have been alluded to, the next stage will be a proper feasibility study which will then make an assessment of what is required and where would the best location for that be and all those other things.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Future-proofing provision.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
That is where far more people have bought into the conversation.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Brilliant. At what stage would the Assembly be asked, do you think, to approve the full project cost? How long do you think we will be waiting for it to come to the Assembly?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
The 2028 Budget, I would have thought.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Certainly for inclusion within the 2028 Budget figures for construction of a new campus, so that would be the time where it would be debated, because it would appear there.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
What lessons have been learned from previous major capital projects that we can learn from now for this one?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It would be really good if it was not looking at previous big projects, it was not delayed and then started and then suggested something is not the right location. What we need to do is just to try to get on with it.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, do not want to wait 10 years for a new bridge.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
No. That can also cost an awful lot of money when changes are made.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
How many additional apprenticeships, technical qualifications, or higher education places are hoping to be anticipated?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I do not know if we have figures for something like that at the moment. That is probably one of the things we have to work on here.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Are you in discussion with the Minister for Health and Social Services re skills needed for building the hospital as well as staffing it, as part of your discussion programme?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There has been some work done around that, but that was probably before I became a Minister, was it not?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, a pretty critical piece. Will you have provision under the lifelong learning for career switches?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
So you talk about a lot of young people and a lot of apprenticeships, but there are a lot of people that want to switch careers. These youngsters now will only hold a job down for 3 to 5 years and

they are going to be career switching, so will need to have access. That is that lifelong learning piece, so that will be taken into consideration, will it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, because it does seem now that people will often change careers once or twice or more during their lifetimes, so we want to enable that. One of the things we talked about was this modular learning and making it easier for people to build on what they already know. So that is part of what we are working on.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Then careers will wrap around.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. So to consider all of that, we are doing a lot of work on that at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Full time jobs held by entitled staff have fallen in every round since 2023. How does the skills and apprenticeship budget respond and which growth sectors are apprenticeships aligned with?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
This is about, sorry, the number of jobs?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes. The full-time jobs held by entitled staff have fallen in every round. How does the skills and apprenticeship budget respond?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Like I said, there is already the data collected through Skills Jersey and the Economic Department, and we try to respond to that. I am just trying to think how often that comes through now. We can perhaps get back to you on that one. There is the data and the Skills Jersey response to it already.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes. And the growth sectors of which apprenticeships are going to be aligned with.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Like I say, it is responding to what Skills Jersey comes up with and the Economic Department. We have regular meetings on that.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

They have some reports, have they not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think, yes, so I am just trying to remember some of the recent ones that were mentioned. Some of them even to do with finance on a slightly more higher level than the starting area. There is a lot done already.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Because it will feed into what the building looks like, what your provision is, et cetera. So what financial assessment has been undertaken to compare the costs and anticipated benefits of establishing and operating a new facility with alternative approaches, including potential collaborative arrangements? But we have probably touched on that with your questions, so you have probably answered that one. What measurable outcomes will be used to assess the proposal's educational value, benefits to local employers, and overall value for money for Jersey taxpayers?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I expect we will be looking at the outcomes we already look at, to do with the success of those continuing their training and when they leave and where they go and whether they get the jobs or the positions they want. It would be the current measures we use, will it not, so also the outcomes we currently use.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes, looking again back to the range of qualifications that are offered, the uptake on those qualifications, the success of students within those qualifications, satisfaction rates that we would have, making that link with industry more robust. So we are ensuring that we are meeting those, or supporting to meet those skills gaps that appear. So, again, a number of things as we start reshaping the provision that the college will deliver.

Deputy V. Li:

In the context of that, it is because we received all the data from Statistics Jersey, and so that is why we want to understand about whether you are preparing our young people to fit into the job that they are going to step into. It is much broader than just the data that is coming from Skills Jersey. So that is why we want to understand about those questions with details right now.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

I can take over next, yes. But can I just follow up on that bit, because I was at a Scrutiny hearing with the Minister for Economic Development last week and he was saying he is a catalyst for a lot

of things because he does not control a lot of areas around the economy. I noted on his panel for growth you are not present.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I will be.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Will you?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
On the Economic Growth Group, yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Right, okay, that is reassuring.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It has only just started. Yes, I have had discussions with him and he does know that he wants me there to represent the skills and everything as well. So I am going to be on that group, yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Well, if you are supplying the learning.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It is really important, yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
The economy needs it. The 2 have to be run together. Okay, thank you. That is reassuring to note. On student finance, it has been noted by key stakeholders that student finance is largely absent from budget narrative. How can the Assembly be assured that student support remains a strategic priority when there is little detail on future policy developments, ongoing reviews, or anticipated funding pressures?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I have just been looking at the reports that the Student Loan Support Group has just put together. Of course, we wanted to do more work on this when I was in scrutiny. At the moment where we are is I have asked for all the different figures to do with how student finance could be done differently, whether there are loans for some of it, whatever. We have those numbers. It does not necessarily mean that there is a better way to do it. Having looked at those numbers, there is no easy, simple

way, because if you change certain things to loans, it then becomes a burden for the young people when they finish studying, but also the likelihood of it getting paid back is not particularly high. But all these things are under consideration. What we are doing at the moment is looking to see where increases have not been made perhaps when they should have been, and trying to address that point around the thresholds and things like that. So we will be able to make that announcement quite soon. But it is a very important subject. Once I became the Minister, I thought I really want to look into this, so we are looking at different possibilities. But as I said, right now, it is more about trying to improve the structure we have currently at the moment.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

One of the topics a lot of people are discussing is getting Jersey students to go to university and then come back again. So would there be a thought process that you might give a grant a go, but it turns into a loan if you do not come back?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have been looking at these possibilities. It does seem to require a lot more expense to do anything slightly differently than what we are already doing. So that is one consideration. As for encouraging students to come back, there have been improvements on the work that is already being done. There is the database of the students who can be contacted. There is the newsletter that goes out several times a year. There are one-to-one appointments offered to them at any time with a skills adviser. There is quite a lot done already. It just has not been publicised very much. So there is a lot of effort already to encourage students back to the Island.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

The States previously committed to reviewing the asset threshold used to determine eligibility for student grants. What progress has been made and when will the review be published, and is there any funding implication being incorporated into the proposed Budget?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We will look at the asset threshold along with the other points. There is not anything more to say on that at the moment.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

You do not think there are funding implications depending on how that review goes?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The numbers are lower now than they were a few years ago for people accessing higher education. So it is part of the big picture of what we want to look at and see if there are any trends around here

or if it is just, as that happens, just coincidence. Along with that, we look at all the thresholds and how that is working, if there are any particular barriers to people accessing higher education.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
What work has been undertaken to review courses currently excluded from the clinical component grant, and what conclusions have been reached and have any budget provisions been made to expand eligibility?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I do not know if I can answer that one at the moment.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Yes, so this is part of what the Minister has been saying that, since she is a very short time since she has been in post, we have been looking at small things that can be easily adjusted to make things fairer, and those clinical components are among them. So we have costings for that. When we come back with Tanya and discuss that with the Minister, I think we will be able to address some of those oddities. It requires changing the order to the law, but it does not affect many people. So the impact on the budget probably will not be prohibitive. But that is coming to a conclusion, that particular consideration. We are hoping to be able to move forward with some of those small things to address what appear to be daft inequalities, but have only come to light as the scheme was working, and then you realise it was a bit odd when it disadvantages somebody. So those sorts of things, a number of small changes, including the clinical components piece. We are quite well advanced with that work, and I would hope it would be able to be accommodated within the Budget as proposed, but until we have got to the end of it, we will not know. Just generally, the 2027 Budget is meant to be a standstill because the house is so new, Ministers are so new. When we come forward in 2028 to 2030, we will have had time as a group to see whether any of those priorities will or will not fit within existing budget. But I think that one will; I might be wrong. But I would say we will be able to address some of those.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, it is not that easy for me to verbalise some of these changes right now, because there are quite a number of small areas we are looking at, as well as the bigger picture. So some of them may just require the ability for more discretion from the Minister, for example. So it is quite numerous really, is it not, at the moment? We are trying to improve what is there.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Because one of the things that I was struck by was, for teaching, if you are trying to train to be a teacher and you get put into a placement in a U.K. school, you are going to have to have

accommodation and you are probably paying for accommodation here already. So you end up with a double cost. So the fact that seems to be excluded seemed to be ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Well, I do not know. My daughter is doing this right now, her P.G.C.E. (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) in the U.K., so she has the same accommodation that she has had during her degree.

[13:15]

But, clearly, we need to consider anyone's difficulties around being able to train, especially in teaching.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
How have maintenance grant increases for the next academic year been calculated? Which inflation or cost-of-living index has been used? Minister, do you consider the increase is sufficient to reflect the costs faced by Jersey students studying away from the Island?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
First of all, when we have seen that there was a miss for increasing the thresholds, we are covering that now. That is about to be published. So that will be quite a good increase. The amount of maintenance required or given out, what is the name of the measure we use, the U.K. C.P.I. (Consumer Price Index), just to make sure I say it right. So that is how it is increased at the moment.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Do you think that is sufficient for Jersey students in the U.K.?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I would not mind starting all over again with the whole student finance thing, to be honest. But we have to look at what we have now and what we can work on to improve. Then, at the same time, looking at the bigger picture to see what is possible and what would work best.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Can we look forward to you starting with a blank sheet of paper for 2028 and beyond?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We have to look at it. It may be that, in the current constraints we have, because nobody has an unlimited budget, that what we are doing now may be the best way to do it. But I am quite happy to look at all sorts of possibilities.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Thank you. There have been recent announcements regarding increasing U.K. university tuition fee caps. Have you made an assessment of what financial impact that may have on Jersey students and what provision has been included in the Budget to meet any additional costs?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is covered, yes; it is fully covered.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Have you considered alternatives, including non-U.K. study routes, so how you fund people going elsewhere? Does the department also track how many students who receive student finance return to Jersey after graduating? Is there any budget for graduates' return strategy? That is multiple questions, we should break it down into the component parts.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

With the first question, my understanding is that students can apply for universities outside the U.K.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:

And Jersey, of course.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Do we promote that as an option? Because someone was telling me only recently, you should see what Rennes can offer in terms of a business school and things like that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I know we can do a lot more as well on the promotion, though, because I have found, since taking up this position, that there is an awful lot of good work that goes on. It is just not very well known about. So we can do a lot more still on that. On the other questions, that was about the numbers returning, was it not?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Do you track who comes back, which I think you have already said already?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We try to, but of course students do not always respond to what we ask of them. A lot are not that interested in responding, so we cannot make them reply.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Does their social security number just not pop back up on the system?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

There may well be a route to it.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Just give them a social security number, then as soon as they come back ...

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I am sure it is not without complexity, but I guess if we really want to do this, there may well be ways. It is just how you do that, but information collected for different purposes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Does it go back to Tell Us Once?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes, if you are trying to understand where students are that might be the route. If they are happy for us to do that, then maybe there are possibilities just joining systems up.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have sent out a survey in the past, it was a couple of years ago I think, but, again, the response from students was not very high.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Is there any budget for trying to attract them back? I know, personally, I have said that I do not know that everyone should come back straight away. It is quite good for people to get experience abroad. But, that said, we would like everyone to come back one day. Well, not everyone, any who wants to.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. So all the information for graduate opportunities are there for them to see at any time on the gov.je website, and also from the newsletters that are sent them, from the possibility for them to arrange that one-to-one discussion whenever they need to. But some of them may want to build lives outside of the Island for a while. It is not something we can make people do, I do not think. As you know, there are improvements in housing now because the age limit has changed for social-rented housing. So they may be able to access that if they come back into the Island. So they are perhaps less of a barrier than they used to be.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

But you do not have a budget dedicated to trying to bring people back?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

To bring them back, no, because probably we need to prioritise other areas more so for the budget.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are going to move on to the subject of childcare funding and the early years. Minister, what impact has the initial scheme had on childcare costs for families?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

When you say "the initial scheme", what do you mean exactly?

The Connétable of Grouville:

The scheme that has been up and running so far.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund) one for the 3 to 4 year-olds?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Are you thinking about 2 to 3, the first one; the 2 to 3.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The new 2 to 3?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

The 15 hours for 2 to 3.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay, do you want to answer this?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am happy to. As we touched on it at our last hearing with you that the feedback has been very positive from parents and others. There is certainly not a huge amount of negative concerns or

queries that are coming into the department. So we take that it is working quite successfully for parents currently. As we did say at that hearing, it is a pilot scheme. We are now into the second year of it, so there will be an assessment that takes place at the end of it, but on an ongoing basis we are keeping an eye on it and the feedback is quite positive.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Could you inform the panel if those figures are available? How many families currently benefit from the scheme?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I knew you were going to ask this, and I did have them in front of me for the States question and then I do not today. Does anybody else around the table have them to hand?

Programme Director, Education Reform:
I can answer in a moment, if you give me a few seconds, I will just pull up the data.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Another question perhaps as well while you are on the data, how many additional families are expected to benefit?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
If I am remembering correctly, it is budgeted for something like 690 places. Someone will tell me if that is wrong. We are currently lower than that. Obviously we are still open until next week or so for the families to make claims on last year's cohort, so we will not have a final number. We can share those when they are in, I am sure. But it was at the 500-and-something figure, so there is capacity within the budget that is already there, if that helps with the question. It was not quite the question you asked.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There are some papers at the back as well. Yes, it is difficult to hold all these figures in your head really.

The Connétable of Grouville:
I quite agree. I am sure the panel will not mind us having those figures passed to us at a later stage.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, because there is a table of figures, which I am sure we can provide, which talks about them. Okay, over to you.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

With reference to the first scheme, which is the cohort that were able to claim from 1st January this year, we have had, and I can provide this in writing afterwards, but approximately 500 families or 500 children, there will be some twins within that group, and about £2 million has been paid out so far for that group in terms of direct applicants from families. We have also then got another couple of cohorts. There is a cohort that have been supported by the Jersey Child Care Trust, which I can provide another set of data on, and also those on income support who are already being supported, albeit through an existing scheme. In terms of the new cohort, which opened this academic year, we have about £100,000 paid out so far. Around 50 families have applied and there are about 2 dozen applications in progress with the Jersey Child Care Trust. But it is anticipated those will be small numbers because you make a payment and then you apply in arrears, so that will build as we come into that end of November, December phase.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, I am sure those figures will be most welcome. What indicators, Minister, will be used to evaluate the success of the new scheme?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We get feedback from parents, of course.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is a set of indicators around things like take-up and the access as well, the feedback from parents. There will be feedback from nurseries as well and ongoing discussions about capacity there. Even down to are we hearing from employers that they are seeing more women going back to work, that is something that it may not be a formal indicator on the system, but those conversations are happening continually.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Good.

Deputy V. Li:

Will that be used as an indicator?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not know that is a formal indicator on there. It is more of an informal one, I would suggest.

Deputy V. Li:

I would think that was designed to encourage parents to return to workforce.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

There are a host of different things in here. The first thing to say is we benefit from pre-existing baseline data. For example, when young children are moving out of that childcare phase and starting to attend school, you might have heard of the phrase "on-entry data." There is a series of metrics around primary indicators, primarily in the context of early as opposed to primary school, that we can track over time. So, we will be looking to see if those have changed. As we have heard already, there are also some employment factors in there. It might be that we rely more on some of the pre-existing survey work that is carried out by Statistics Jersey to look and see if things have changed in there. We have also, as a consequence of having some more funding in this a few years ago, initiated 2 separate sets of survey work that give us other baseline or improvement indicators. One we have made reference to in the past around looking at the provider survey; we are looking towards our third or perhaps fourth year of doing that. Understanding issues around workforce, around capacity; that has widened now, of course, with the addition of childminders, and it has further widened recently with the Minister's addition of accredited nannies. Then, we have also conducted the first parent and carer survey, which provides, again, importantly, the baseline data, which makes reference to the extent to which there are challenges, of which you will be unsurprised to hear the number one challenge was around cost, which is why funding has been a critical thing, but also around provision of capacity, around flexibility, and then some of the return-to-work aspect. There is a question which sets out a multitude of different factors that are important, including, have I managed to stay at work? Have I managed to return to work? Have I managed to increase my hours at work? These are published on the childcare policy page, and they either provide benchmarks from which we can measure improvement or, indeed, some tracking of improvement or otherwise since then.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I know that, while the broader economic outlook is really important around this, our main aim, and I know the Assistant Minister agrees with me when we have discussed this, is the welfare of children. All the evidence shows that children tend to benefit at this age from up to around 20 hours per week of early years care. We always have that as the main priority, what is best for children themselves.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Minister.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Does that mean beyond 20, they do not benefit?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It did not show the same benefits. It was up to that amount, because every family is different, but we have to consider it in the round. So, that is where we set that.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is from a child development point of view, so from the child-focused point of view. You will hear other things from affordability or employers.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Of course, each family has to decide what is best for them. But for us, we have to decide on the broader position, and that is where we are.

Deputy V. Li:

Could we follow up with a question so we can have all the indicators and the research that, based on this 20 hours, to pass to the panel so then we can follow up?

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Of course, it is published, but we will show you specifically where in that evidence document it is. But if I may just come back to the point of, let us call it the 21st hour, there is certainly not evidence of diminishing returns or negative impact. What we have is there absolutely is evidence that has been sourced up to 20 hours. The evidence is not so clear beyond that. That is why the Minister has been able to be confidently asserting to a level of provision, which has to align with the welfare of children in that early education and childhood provision. But that is where the limit has been so far. But, of course, we will provide that data and that evidence.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. What evidence provides assurance that providers can absorb additional demand? The panel notes that a local private nursery recently permanently closed due to staff shortages.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There were a number of issues around the reason why that nursery closed and it is a part of a large business, national business, and they have to make their own decisions about what works best for their business. They were offered a lot of assistance from the department to continue. But in the end, it is their decision whether they close or not. I do not know if you want to add to that.

[13:30]

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Just to add that the provider surveys, again, I referenced in the States Assembly in answer to the question, and we are now up to 2 or 3 of them and we have a commitment that it will be an annual survey. The last one did show that providers expected to have increased capacity by September 2026. I understand all the children who were at the nursery that did close moved to other spaces in the main within that group. Some did go to other places. A new nursery opened in September as well. So it is something that officers particularly are continually monitoring the sector feedback, as you would expect as well. Then there is that annual survey as well. So it is something we are very aware of.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Do you think or believe that there is a geographical issue where capacity may be constrained, should we say?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We want parents and families to have choice in their childcare providers. In an Island like Jersey, where we do have a constrained market, we are not saying there is choice for everybody all of the time at every single age group and every location as well. So that is something I am very aware of. I live out west, I represent constituents out west, there are not a huge amount of nurseries out west. That is a fact. I can speak from a personal point of view that, since the pandemic, and people's work-life balance and patterns of working have changed, the nurseries have had to respond to that as well. It is not all about just nurseries in St. Helier anymore as well.

The Connétable of Grouville:
What workforce shortages currently exist across the childcare sector; are those figures available?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Again, in the provider survey, which is published but we can send a link to it, that always asks questions about the workforce and the challenges are recognised there. An example is, for example, there has been an increase in the number of the workforce working part-time. Again, it is probably a pattern we are seeing in other sectors as well. But that is something that they cite as being a challenge. There are others in there. I cannot quite remember all of them off the top of my head, but, yes, it is acknowledged it is a challenge.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Okay. What support is being provided to recruit and retain childcare workers?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry to sound like a broken record because I said this again last time, it is on my list of questions as I move forward with this remit about what we are doing education-wise and the support via Highlands. There has been a lot of focus on it in the past few years for exactly that reason. But making sure that the right pathways are in place at the right levels; the nursery cites certain levels in childcare qualifications that they find harder to recruit to than others. Are we doing enough in those areas is a question that is on my to-do list; let us put it that way.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:

The early years team have an early years advisory service. We have a significant number of staff running training for private nurseries. They run twilight sessions. So, for providers in the evening who are not able to release staff during the working day, they run training on Saturdays. They also do a lot of bespoke training where they go in and visit settings and support and advise.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, but a slight difference that I can say as well, we are reviewing the Day Care Law currently because, although of course it is very important that people are well-trained who are looking after small children, some of the regulations may be unnecessary that are in that legislation. So, we are looking to see how we can make it easier for private nurseries to operate as well to a very high standard. We are looking into that too where there is anything that is unnecessary.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, under what set of circumstances would the scheme be amended? Is there anything that you regard as a major cause and effect?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It seems to be operating well. Do you have any thoughts on that, Lucy? It is a pilot, is it not?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is a pilot. I do not know how to answer that; I would not want to say we could never change it, because you need to be responsive, do you not, and so ...

Programme Director, Education Reform:

If I may just add a couple of things in terms of where there is a degree of certainty, and therefore where is there an opportunity to review. There is absolute certainty over the recurring level of funding. The pilot, remember, is around the means by which we offer the funding to the children via families applying for it, unlike the Nursery Education Fund where it goes directly to provider. Before

the 2-year mark, we will look at the pilot aspect of the scheme, which is around that payment methodology, but the funding is in place and at the moment it is there on a recurring basis. But, as we have heard, we take feedback, we undertake survey work, and therefore we look to be informed by data, by evidence, by feedback from parents and families, and if there are opportunities for improvement evident from that work, then that will be for consideration.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The Minister recently signed an order to include nannies. That is a good example that was based on feedback, and as soon as the Minister was in post, it was something that she set in train to happen.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, we knew that there were some families who were doing essential jobs between them, which required shift work sometimes, maybe in health services and so on, and the best option for them was to be able to employ someone at their home to help look after the children. So, we have responded to that, and for many other people, but that was one example of families who needed that particular way of help with the children.

Deputy V. Li:
Are you going to look at the eligibility of the applicant as well?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The eligibility of the ...?

Deputy V. Li:
Of the applicant, of applying for this funding?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It is a universal benefit currently, so I do not know that I understand the question.

Deputy V. Li:
Because one of the things is that we were trying to understand is how the Government can ensure all the providers have the capacities, given that some of the nurseries have warned us that the funding does not guarantee the places. Is that going to be put into consideration? Because I would think that is something that you have received from your review.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

As it stands, there are no plans to review the eligibility criteria; just to review the pilot payment mechanism. We are aware of increases in capacity, and we are aware of some capacity constraints, but there was an acknowledgement at the point at which this was implemented that there may be some settling in the market, consequence of injecting some more funds with a degree of certainty from Government. The hope would be that provides some additional certainty for providers to increase that provision, if that is possible, notwithstanding challenges around workforce, but specifically to your point on intentions to change eligibility, there are none as it stands today. But clearly, if the Minister or Assistant Minister wish to take a look at that, that would be a new item.

Deputy V. Li:

Because, in reverse, is that if you do not have the injection of the additional funding, then you possibly will consider less as a universal funding, but then more targeted funding.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I was just going to say that all the research done into this shows that universal funding works best. If you try to target funding for families with children that age group, that sometimes they just do not turn up, basically. It seems to be really important to do it as a universal funding method for the sake of children.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

Indeed, when we provide the evidence base to you, we can also highlight that research that points to delivery mechanisms, as the Minister has said, being much more effective if delivered universally than targeted. So there was a lot of research around how targeting works or does not work for families with children with additional needs and also families under financial challenges. While, from an inclusion perspective, there was not much differentiation, there was significant differentiation in effectiveness when you looked at some of the financial challenges that families struggle with, and therefore universal was a decision that was made. But, again, we can point out, along with that number of hours that is beneficial, how the delivery mechanism is evidence-based.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are moving on now to the subject of free school meals, which all around the Island will be being enjoyed fairly soon or have just been enjoyed. Minister, what evidence informed the decision to extend free school meals to all Government secondary schools and Highlands College?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

First of all, of course, we know how successful this has been in the primary schools. When those children move into secondary school it is, I would have thought, quite clear that it is beneficial for them to be able to access a good meal as well. The same methodology applies in secondary school

as primary school as to who can claim the free school meal. If not that, it is a very low amount to be paid. So I probably have written down here different reasons, different evidential reasons, but it is quite clear that we follow on from the success of the primary schools. I am just wondering if we have some particular evidential reasoning. Certainly, one of the points is that this is something that families think will help them an awful lot, especially with the cost-of-living crisis. From the public health perspective, it is really good for children who may not get a hot meal, because their parents perhaps are too busy sometimes doing several jobs for whatever reasons, it is very good for children to have that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Could you tell the panel how many pupils are expected to qualify and what is the total annual cost?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have that figure here. We have the figures, of course. So the total budget is £3,701,000.

The Connétable of Grouville:

How many pupils are expected to qualify for the scheme?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The latest figures show that around 48 per cent of the meals have been provided free of charge, and that is approximately 10,000 meals. So it is a very big scale.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Significant, yes. Okay. Is that funding recurrent across all 4 years of this Budget? In other words, is this going to carry on, do you think?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Why has a discretionary approach been chosen rather than the universal provision or eligibility based on Jersey Premium?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The eligibility at the moment includes Jersey Premium and a few other categories as well. We know that sometimes some families might find things hard if they are not in one of those categories. At the moment, headteachers will just offer those children free meals if they are asked.

The Connétable of Grouville:

They have discretion.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. The reason why that is operating in that way rather than everyone having a free meal is because we have to prioritise the budgets that we have. It may be that the amount of funding that would be required for everyone to get a free school meal would probably wipe out some of the things that we need to spend the money on, perhaps around special educational needs, things like that.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It is probably also worth saying that the cost of the meal to those that pay at £2.50 is subsidised.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Heavily subsidised.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Heavily subsidised. That cost has been the cost for a number of years as well. So we are trying to keep that as low as we can. Although the point about universal delivery or universal provision is obviously important, it is also important that the £2.50 is heavily subsidised.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So everyone is getting a very good value meal or free meal. There was a written question to us recently about this and the cost for making the free meals available to all came into millions of pounds. It would cut back on other areas of the budgets. Clearly, there are people who can afford to pay £2.50 for a meal.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. How will the impact on attendance and attainment be measured?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Right, so we are talking about ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

A student's outcome.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

General attendance and attainment.

Deputy V. Li:

No, because you just mentioned that the attendance has been used as one indicator for the success of the school meal.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In relation to school meals, how is that improving attendance?

[13:45]

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

There is a lot of work going on in schools to improve attainment and improve attendance. But what we do know is that, if children are healthy and are not worried about food and are coming in and having a hot lunch, that is going to improve a number of things for them during their school day. So we will see that in overall indicator figures across the Island, but within schools, we will see it there within their own individual indicator figures, but also within school reviews as well. It becomes a bit more tricky to say those attendance numbers are improved just because of school meals, but it is within a package of things that are delivered with it. That really chimes with what we are trying to do within the inclusion agenda as well. So there will be a number of things. But, as the Minister has recognised, this is a really important component to enable children to be ready to learn and to be happy and healthy at school.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

This is the overall aim that children feel comfortable and relaxed when they are at school. They are not worried about too many things, otherwise they are not going to be able to learn. So whatever we can do to make it a nicer experience for them is what we are aiming for. Obviously they have to learn as well, but they also have to feel comfortable at school.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. The panel believes that the initiative builds on the Haute Vallée pilot. What lessons have been learned at that school, do you think?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

At Haute Vallée, we had a visit up to Haute Vallée not long ago and had a look in the dining room and talked to the headteacher. Of course, there are some changes that need to be made to roll out bigger access to school meals that might occur. I am trying to think if there is anything else.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

We know there is a demand.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, that is it; the demand was the main thing.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Feedback from the leadership team of the school, very positive about its introduction within the school community, how the free school meals element is introduced. So, it is just seamless and there is no indication about who is receiving those free school meals or not, and the systems that then need to go with it. Also for the provider themselves, how they can upscale and be able to deliver that within the other schools as well because obviously they would be delivering more meals.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
That is Caring Cooks. This is the direction they want to go in at the moment, is to provide the meals in the secondary schools and build on what they are already doing.

The Connétable of Grouville:
How will consistency be met between the schools?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
That is probably easier with the same provider. Although, saying that, Highlands College have their own provision, so we will have to make sure that the quality of food and the delivery there is to the standard we would expect. But then across the other schools, it makes it easier with the same provider.

The Connétable of Grouville:
You have just mentioned standards there. What accountability measures will apply?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
That will be within the contract that we have with the provider.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It is a very long and detailed contract.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Yes, there are obviously expectations, deliverables. They have to meet food standards, particularly. We continue to work with Public Health to ensure those food standards are met. Then it is continued monitoring alongside the provider. But we have very good relationships with our providers, and they have been partners in this journey with us.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The final question about the evidence has been met. So thank you, Chair.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. One of the interesting comparisons is that, because just now we are talking about using the methodology to be applied to the 2 to 3 years of funding, because what we have been convinced is the universal funding works the best. But now we are getting back to the school meal is that we are now being told that we cannot do targeted or we are doing the targeted support right now for the school meal, and you mentioned about the same methodology.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The methodology we apply depends on what the evidence shows is best for any particular subject. Around early years, we can see there is plenty of evidence to show that universal funding works best. There is no evidence to show that works best in providing school meals. So we go by what works well for that subject.

Programme Director, Education Reform:

The Minister is absolutely right; it is entirely contextual. If you think for the comparison you are giving with the nursery provision, there is a potential barrier that requires a whole host of application up front to access a nursery in the first place. In the context of school meals, the children and young people are already at the school they are attending as a consequence of that educational provision. So they are very different. One is lots of work to require access; that is in the early years. One is I am already accessing educational provision. I am at my canteen with my peers. So it is a very different delivery model.

Deputy V. Li:

I think, again, if you could provide us with more details, that would be really helpful. Thank you. Now we are moving to education outcomes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Minister, although I ought to say beforehand, just your comment about long contracts, I do not think long contracts necessarily give us what we necessarily want, thinking of other topics. Does the Budget include funding to collect and publish school outcomes data, including attendance and pupil mobility?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes, it does.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Will that be published as a matter of course?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. In fact, this is something that I have been working on. The Assistant Minister who cannot be here today, Senator Boleat, is really keen on data being published as well. We are going to have quite a lot published very shortly.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
By the end of the year.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. So there will be lots of data out there on outcomes and the other things you mentioned as well.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
What time periods is that going to cover if it is coming out at the end of this year?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I would need to check. I am not sure how far we go back in terms of ...

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Is it a single academic year or considerably longer?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Which years are we publishing? I do not know.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
We normally publish a 5-year scale. The caveat is that we are normally very cautious about COVID data. So what we have done in the past with data that we have shared is that you grey out the data for the 2 years where COVID was a significant influence because it is unique, the way that exams were marked, grades were allocated. You have central assessed grades and teacher assessed grades for 2 consecutive years. We know that the data nationally across the whole of the United Kingdom was very different under those grade boundaries. We normally have been looking at 2019 and then comparing it to later, taking out 2020 and 2021. But we normally look at a 5-year average.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I suppose the change now is that we are going to be publishing a lot more data. We have had that being worked on for quite a number of weeks.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Yes, we are publishing online. So your question is obviously from now going forward, but how far back we go, we just need to confirm that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, and we want to make sure that what we publish explains the context as well, so that people are well informed.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Does that mean this work is not budget dependent?

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
No, it is not.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Within that, what attainment indicators are likely to be of greatest concern to you?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We will respond to anything which we think is not looking as good as it should be. This is what we do. But we do not see any reason why the public should not know these figures. Like I said, we need to explain the context. In a school where, for example, a group of the children might leave at a certain point to go to study their G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) somewhere else, that is a point to be taken into context when looking at their exam results. So there is the number of children with S.E.N.D. at the school, of course, who may study alternative-type courses as well. These factors have to be explained alongside the publication of all the data, which is what we are going to do.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
What investment are you making from the proposed Budget that will directly impact and improve attainment levels in Jersey?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
What we have already got, and it is budgeted for, are the partnership leads. We think this is going to help enormously. So schools will work more closely together. Teachers will be able to work across different areas of different schools, and so this will help with the individual schools budgeting,

but it will also help with the expertise moving to different schools, showing better practice at different schools, and that will lead to better attainment as well. So there is that. I am trying to think if there are some other things which will make a material difference.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

We are also looking, through reorganisation of ourselves within the department or the central Education tam, and just about how we support schools in line with the creation of new partnerships. There is also the response to the inclusion review. There is our assessment of the future demographics, which we touched on earlier, and around the organisation of our schools and making sure that we are putting money into the right place. So this is not necessarily about growth money in. This is about making sure we are spending the money we have in the right places for the best outcomes for children.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Are you spending money to reduce attainment gaps between pupils from different backgrounds?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have the Pupil Premium in place to address that matter. It was at the last hearing, we talked about you could see the closing of any gap in primary and the later years, but there was the main secondary school area. We have been doing work on why that is happening at the moment, seeing where we can make improvements there. That work is ongoing.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Is there a specific amount of money being directed in that cause?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

For Pupil Premium, I have the numbers here somewhere.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Maybe we could send the table in after, but we do, and it shows the growth of the Jersey Premium figure as well over time. I believe we now fund per pupil higher than the U.K. as well. We have also got that broken down by individual schools as well.

Deputy V. Li:

Our question is that, because that Jersey Premium is not a new scheme that has been put into place since 2019, I believe, and we have not seen any significant increase or decrease of the gaps in secondary school. Our question is more specifically, what proposed budget is there to target on narrowing the gaps?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We have seen the improvements in the other school areas. It is just that one, which is why we are focusing on that one to see what is happening there, why it is not working as well.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
We also have attainment funding. Schools also get funding targeted for the start of different phases. So if a school has a number of children who join them who are below the average attainment for that cohort, then there is additional funding. That works in from primary, throughout primary, up to year 7 and 8. So there is recognition that children are coming from different starting points and there is a funding differential made for that group as well.

Deputy V. Li:
How much is that annual funding?

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
I knew that was going to be your next question. I am afraid I do not have that at my fingertips here, but we can provide that information for you.

Deputy V. Li:
No, because if it is just like £100,000 or if we do not have a number, we have no idea.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
I could come back to you with that figure.

Deputy V. Li:
Great, thank you.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I was just going to add that the discipline around the 2027, this Budget 2027 to 2030, was, as much as possible, a standstill Budget. So you will notice that Education and Lifelong Learning has had no specific growth injection in this Budget. The 2 cost-of-living schemes, the nursery and the school meals, are currently held in reserve. So when you look at our numbers, it is last year's brought forward; that does not mean that we are not flexing our budget differently internally. So when we talk about all the reviews that we have had, that leads to an internal decision about how best to apply budget, our recurring budget, and we do that with rigour every year. The bit that we are saying the additional funding for children with additional needs, including deprivation, we look at every year. We have a basic formula, which is published on the website, and we can again send you the link to

that. But we are looking at that. The opportunity with the partnership leads is again to see how well the school funding formula directs the money. But it is not just about money, it is about what we do with it. Addressing practice improvement, as Rachel suggested, so it will not be visible in the Budget, because the Budget is the same as last year's, essentially, more or less. But that does not mean that we are not recycling it proactively to priority areas in a structured process we go through each and every year.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
You referenced COVID. So are we back to attendance rates, pre-pandemic levels, and have we got any interventions, which are funded in this Budget, to try to improve them if not?

[14:00]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
COVID had a huge impact on how children come to school and everything, of course, and it has continued for quite a while. Would you like to answer?

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
I do not have the attendance figures to hand, but, overall, we are monitoring them very carefully. I am nervous to quote without having the figures in front of me, but attendance is similar to where we were before COVID. We are facing the same challenges as the whole of the United Kingdom and Europe in terms of attendance. It is a little bit, we have to be cautious with making pre and post-COVID just as a baseline, because what we have seen is the way that young people and families are seeing school, the way that they are engaging with us as an education provider has changed, and it is not necessarily caused by COVID, but it has given us a benchmark after which we can see a difference. We are certainly focusing on attendance as one of our key priorities for the next 3 to 5 years, and we will keep it under careful monitoring, and we will look at it in the round, but we will also look at it for all different groups, comparing different vulnerabilities; so attendance for young people with a S.E.N.D. background, attendance for young people who have socioeconomic challenge, and all of the other criteria. You will see differences at different ages. One of the things we have noticed is that attendance has changed. Where you might have seen a dip at 13, 14, we are beginning to see a dip younger; so families are having more difficulties with younger children than was historically the case before COVID. We are monitoring it, but it is complex. But we are working with our educational welfare teams, our attendance teams, and headteachers have it as a high priority across the piece.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, so we want to make schools appear to be more welcoming, and the inclusion work we are doing is focused on that as well. With any new schools, like the new town school that is planned, it is going to be very much a community school, so to try to present schools slightly differently as well. Other particular work that goes on, which we do not hear much about, it has gone out of my mind for a moment, the name of the gym exercise group you spoke to just recently, Sports Bug, for example, have done work with children who have not been attending at school and made some huge successes with particular children. We look at other providers and what they can help us with as well. I am just thinking of one particular young man who hardly ever attended school and, after some interventions with them and the work they do, he is now doing really well. He has left school now; he is doing really well. So there are particular targeted things we can do to help some children as well.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
One of the earlier answers I gave you around the plan and the actions resulting from the inclusion review, attendance forms a big part of that as one of the workstreams.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
If you look back at 2024, school improvement funding was at £5.8 million. We see in 2027 it is £2 million. While we are all leaving 2028, 2029 and 2030 with big question marks as to what will come next, it says nothing by 2029. With demand for S.E.N.D. provision rising, what is it that we will not be able to do in the years ahead?

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Are you just saying the funding, is this the school estate?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, that is the estate, the buildings.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
The buildings, yes, school improvement funding, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, so we are going to be working on that for the next Budget to ensure that there is sufficient funding, because it does not show it for 2029 and 2030 at all at the moment, where obviously of course there needs to be funding available for the school estate improvements and repairs. That is what we are working on for the next Budget.

Deputy V. Li:

Because we asked this question at the last hearing. Yes, so if we can know that. Because we asked this question at the last hearing, so if we can have some answer back from the department, that would be helpful.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Sorry, what is the specific question you are asking?

Deputy V. Li:
This question about the school funding, school improvement funding.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Do you want the list of what we have spent in 2026?

Deputy V. Li:
Yes, and we want to understand why there is no funding for 2029 and where is the contingency if there is the need for S.E.N.D. required in certain schools.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
We can provide you with the table, absolutely, in terms of what we spent in 2026, or up until this date anyway, up until this point. In terms of answering your question, it does not appear at the moment in 2029 or 2030, so we are going to have to work with the Treasury, colleagues in Treasury, and the Minister will need to work with her colleagues as well to get recognised the estate improvements that need to be made in 2029 and 2030, and then that will then need to be built into the Budget for 2028.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
That is what we are doing. This is not specifically to do with S.E.N.D., this is about school buildings.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
For example, this will include site security, it will include heat management in schools, it will include improvements to learning areas, which absolutely will potentially have a S.E.N.D. focus, how we improve the environments to either develop new additional resource provisions or change the fabric of classrooms, replacing old classrooms or old equipment will be included within that. The demand is significant, and we all recognise that going into 2029 with no funding is going to be difficult, but as ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It will not happen. That is not going to happen.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

No, and, as Anne has said, this is a Budget that has moved over from 2026 into 2027. The case has to be made during 2027, ahead of the 2028 Budget, why we would need additional funding now.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Maybe things like new fencing around the school perimeter, things like that.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Because one of the complaints made in most departments of years is we do not just spend enough money just to keep the lights on and the roofs fixed, and all the rest of it, so presumably there must be a business-as-usual sum of money that is needed day in, day out, rain and shine. I am sure the Minister for Treasury and Resources will be very pleased to hear that you will be asking for more. How, Minister, will your department ensure the budget is delivered equitably across all students?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have the measures in place that we have just spoken about, like Jersey Premium. We aim to provide a good educational service at all the schools that we have, and we have them regularly checked by an independent framework. So what we start with is the intention to provide an equitable service, and of course we have just spoken about the inclusion aims that we have as well to improve that so that every child and young person has a suitable education. It is even written into the Education Law, so it is what we do.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

As well, it is worth noting one of the big reasons for bringing partnership leads in is to get that view across a number of schools, not individual schools in isolation. As we move into the next few years and the change in demographics really starts taking effect, that is a nod to the question as well, making sure that schools are funded in the right way and are delivering to the right number of pupils. But as we see numbers reduced, we could end up with quite small numbers in certain schools and higher numbers in other schools, and that might be a challenge to equity there. So that is something that the Minister is considering as well.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:

From a money point of view, we have some schools funding formulae that seek to allocate resources for schools fairly between all schools. So amounts like estates are done on square footage and age of buildings. Classes must have a teacher. The school funding formula is on the website, and that is our basis. We are not saying that the school funding formula is 100 per cent perfect, and it will be challenged and disrupted by the falling school rolls, because you come to a point where, if anything,

some elements are per pupil, and you just end up with too few pupils to fund a whole teacher. So we will be doing work on the school funding formulae and any transitional arrangements that may be necessary to get from A to B, but there is an underlying method that aims at fair allocation between our schools, taking into account characteristics of those schools and their pupils, like the inclusion formulae that underpin that. I am not saying it is perfect, but the partnerships will help inform us to improve that. But that is for allocating money that we have already got fairly.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Do you ever worry that the vast majority of children who do not have any form of special need, their education might be diluted by all the attention trying to make it fair for everyone?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is a part of education to learn how to exist with people with different needs. Otherwise, somebody growing up in a little bubble is probably not going to do very well anyway. If we think that children might not be doing very well because there may be some children in their school who would be better placed in a special school, then that is better for those children too. That is what we are working on to try to get Mont à l'Abbé extension in place as quickly as we can, because there are some children who definitely have a better experience from being at a school that suits their needs like that. So I would say that it is probably very helpful for children to grow up among other children that they are probably going to spend the rest of their lives with, out in society anyway. But, of course, we do not want their education disrupted at the same time.

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:

The other thing is that all the research suggests that what is good for young people with any level of disadvantage is good for the rest. Raising the standards, raising the quality of teaching, raising the quality of education to support any particular special need will also have a really positive impact on other learners. If I give you an example, we know that for some children, they really need explicit instruction, but we all benefit from explicit instruction. So there are some learners who absolutely cannot do it, and you could give them their instructions in a more around-the-houses kind of way. But, if you have the instructions visually presented and verbally presented, all learners will be able to access the task effectively. So making sure that colleagues understand about cognitive load, for example, making sure that young people are not overloaded in a lesson. Again, that is a benefit to all learners. So the practices that we are putting in to support any young person with any barrier to their learning will benefit all learners. There is really good research from the Education Endowment Fund, which supports that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and when those young people go on to study their G.C.S.E.s, they may be doing different forms of science, G.C.S.E., for example, and some members of their class might be not studying that. Also, I am just thinking about a particular school I went to a while ago, where the children I spoke to were very pleased to have someone with - I do not want to go into details - but particular needs in their classroom, and they liked to help this young person. They benefited greatly from having that young person with them. It was good for all of them. I understand the point of your question, but we have to see it in the round.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Some primary schools have no dedicated space for children with special educational needs. If one of them needs such space in 2027, which budget line is going to pay for it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I am trying to think which primary schools that was.

Deputy V. Li:
We touched base last time in our public hearing last time and, on top of my head, we discussed about St. Luke's School. We talked about ...

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I think Springfield as well.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The work is ongoing to try to place those into the new town school project, because, like I said last time, we inherit the school estate and some of them, the buildings, are very inflexible in how we do things.

[14:15]

Deputy V. Li:
There are 2 things that we were discussing. One is that, because I totally understand about your perspective that is the whole point of inclusion to putting children with learning difficulties and with some ones without the learning difficulties will help them to understand more about empathy and collaborative learning with other pupils. However, special education needs, it varies. Some of the students may need some support with autism and some students who need other emotional regulation might need different support. So, because we talked a lot about the extension of Mont à l'Abbé, but our question is more specific, is that if we have some of the students need such space next year, which budget line pays for it? Where can they get the help?

Programme Director, Education Reform:
Was your recollection that it was only one school?

Deputy V. Li:
It is 3 schools in town.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
So, this is why the development of a new town school is so important, because the reality is we have school buildings that are past their best-use date. The challenges of modern day education is such that buildings from however many years ago cannot accommodate. I completely see your point. We will have young people who will be working in corridors, outside of the classroom, and in spaces which would not meet what we would really want for those young people, which is why the development of a new town primary school is so essential. We are not going to be rectifying that in 2027 in those schools. We obviously have support in place for those young people and we do that through our revenue budgets. But in terms of the buildings, that is where it becomes really difficult. Back to your point about 2028 or 2029 onwards, we will have schools where they will have space for children with S.E.N.D., but that needs improving or upgrading, and that is where that budget line is so important, and that is obviously where we have those 2 years where money is not available at the moment. So the answer to your question is a new town primary school.

Deputy V. Li:
But this is the whole point is that we are trying to understand is, they cannot wait for the new town school to be built in the 4 or 5 years' time. With what you are talking with us, talking to the panel about the partnership leads, one of the points you were making is that, because of having the partnership leads, will help all the schools share the resources. So some of the schools in town would have S.E.N.D. provision, some of the schools do not. Would they consider using facilities to enhance the education? Because, again, this is back to the educational outcome. Can we utilise all those resources?

Associate Director, Policy and Strategy, Education:
You said really accurately that there is a very wide range of need and there will be some children whose needs can be met by adaptive practice in the mainstream classroom. There will be some children who will need some time out with a specialist. It is already the case that we employ some peripatetic specialists who would work across 2 or 3 schools sharing their expertise or running bespoke interventions. We also have really good work with speech and language therapists, for example. So early language, absolutely crucial. We would be bringing in speech and language therapists to come and work with primary teachers, with younger children or with the children directly

to support their learning. If you are talking about the level of need where a young person needs a more bespoke provision, then we have primary schools with A.R.P. (additional resource provision), and we have primary schools without. Now, those are designed to reflect the capacity needs, to reflect the needs of the population. We have A.R.P. places spread across the schools, reflecting partly where the need was and partly where the physical space was, where we were able to put those in place. So it might be the case that a family may be offered a place in a school nearby, but not in their most direct catchment, if that school can better meet the needs of that child. So we adapt it right through from classroom level to individual, maybe an hour or half an hour a day of something different for a child, through to a complete provision where a young person is entitled to a space, an additional resource space for their full education. Then at the highest level, if their needs cannot be met in a mainstream provision or an additional resource provision, then we would offer them a place in a special school. But in the same way that we do not have A.R.P. places in every school, not every child with a special need will access Mont à l'Abbé. So some of those children will be having support in their classroom or in a mainstream setting, and some of those children will be in Mont à l'Abbé. When we have the new Mont à l'Abbé build, then we will have that capacity to offer the specialist provision with a specialist building and the staff for the children with that level of need.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, exactly. All children have different needs and requirements. What we also do is we listen to the parents because parents often ask: "I think my child might do best at this school which has this provision." As much as we can, we take account of that as well, and it is often not the one closest to where they are living. It is not necessarily the problem that it looks like. But of course we still need to ensure that the schools have the best facilities as well.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

You will be pleased to know there are only 9 more questions.

Deputy V. Li:

One minute for one question.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

One minute for each. I listened to the Connétable of St. Lawrence telling any Minister that she can grab hold of that the private sector is being drained of skilled people because the public sector are taking them all. With the hospital project it will get even worse, and the private sector needs trained technical students. We are really keen to know ... we heard you when you came to us last time say 3 of your top 5 priorities were all different construction projects, but we want to know what budget is going to be devoted working with the Minister for Economic Development to identify the skill shortages and develop and implement vocational curriculums now.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay, so the vocational curriculum skills comes under this department. But, of course, we have offered to speak to the Minister for Economic Development as well because we want his input into this too. So the question was ...?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

The question is simply, what budget can you put to identify school shortages and implement vocational curriculum now? But it is linked to comments that she makes on a regular basis, which she can probably articulate better than me.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I have been approached by a lot of commercial employers more so than the finance industry, losing technical staff, lorry drivers, drains people, electricians. But with the build of the new hospital and the build of Mont à l'Abbé and other capital projects, you are going to be needing a great deal of skilled labour. Your benefits package, et cetera, for the Government is quite attractive compared to some of these small commercial businesses that cannot compete. The pension being just one of those packages. What is the Government doing to make sure that these big projects you have coming up, i.e. the hospital, the new build for the college and Mont à l'Abbé, you are going to have the skilled labour on-Island that you have grown yourself rather than just going out to the market, and then small commercial companies losing skilled staff and then leaving them, in some situations, unable to fully service some of their contracts?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If I start with just saying that we have the regular skills meetings and that the one I was at most recently, it included representatives from industry, including building, to put their views across and their needs, which were being responded to.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Did that come across?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

This is where we were planning ahead. There were the courses I have mentioned around scaffolding and so on, but we are planning ahead for what we are going to be investing in next, with courses taking account of what they say they need as well. I do not know if we have more to add really.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

The only thing I would say is that there is going to be a newly formed Ministerial group looking at the delivery of the capital programme. I am sure this will be part of their agenda because obviously, in terms of making sure that all these projects can be delivered, you are absolutely right. We need that ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
That workforce.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Yes. So it needs to be recognised at a Ministerial level and then officers.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
But will it not be budget sitting in your area that they are going to take? Whatever decisions they make, is it not your budget?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We have that budget that I already mentioned funding those skills development areas. But anything extra, I have not seen the results from that yet.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
We already run a number of courses in Highlands in construction and other trades that will be required for the construction industry.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
It sounds like the shortfall exists already and is likely to only get worse. That is really, I guess, where we are coming from.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
We just need to understand that a bit more about what that shortfall is. Because, obviously, you were saying about individuals being attracted to different areas, that might not be under the Minister's remit, providing more opportunities to train, that might be a wider question around employment in the Government.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
It was a shame that not all the skills budget, my understanding, was used from Jersey Business and maybe it was a bit more of an education to smaller businesses, which have not maybe accessed that. If we could get them to train, then you would have an overflow of people for your projects or you could use the private sector a little bit more. But it takes 3 years to get anybody through any

apprenticeship, so I am just conscious of the critical timeline and then flexible working, and there is a whole load of stuff which is not for today, but it is an important key element.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It is really important. But like I said, we did have representatives from private industry on that skills meeting.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Absolutely. Right, so I have some other questions. I am going to be shortening this one. This is a multi-question one, but it is one. You have had a rise of 620 roles, core jobs, between 2021 and 2026, the largest increase of any department, it says here. So where have those jobs gone; are they teaching, are they management, are they admin? So you are 620 extra headcount. So C.Y.P.E.S. core jobs rose by 620 between 2021 and June 2026.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I have the details for the last year, which is that the total workforce stands at 2,063 full-time employees, and 2,497 employees overall, representing a reduction of 18 full-time employees and 27 overall, compared with September 2025. So these are our figures for the last year.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Can I just say something about the longer trend? We will get that table for you. So there are about 60 roles gone into school meals. That has been a really big growth in that period. Then a lot of them have been teaching assistants, as we have ramped up the inclusion and S.E.N.D.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Thank you. That makes sense.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
That is the majority, but we will have the other figures. But one of the surprising things is just the effort it takes to cook and distribute 10,000 meals a day.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Cooking for a family of 4 is challenging enough. Thank you very much.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
But those are the numbers overall for the year.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How many recruits have had to be off-Island rather than homegrown?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
On the big numbers, very few. Usually the off-Island recruits are for the specialist areas, teachers in particular, particular S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, but the numbers are tiny.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
There is senior leadership, but it is small.

Deputy V. Li:
Is that across the last 5 years' time?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Across the last 5 years it has mainly been teaching assistants and setting up the school meals piece. So there are some off-Island ones. We would have to look it up for you, but it is not the majority.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I have one more question because I will not ask the other one. What is your current teacher turnover at the moment?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
I have that right here. Yes, I have it, we are on the right page.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
6.4 per cent.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, C.Y.P.E.S.:
You beat me to it.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
Sorry.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Is that something you are happy with? Is there something being done to improve retention?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is in line with the usual turnover rates. It is a large workforce, and some people leave for different reasons and then new ones come in.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
It is reduced from the previous year slightly.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
That is good. So that is me, thank you. I am conscious of time. So I am going to go back to ...

Deputy V. Li:
One last question from us is value for money. Which programme has the strongest evidence of the impact, and what changed?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
For the value for money savings, do you mean?

Deputy V. Li:
It is not about value for money for savings, but value for money for the evidence and outcome.

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
What would be the best programme for better value for money for the department?

Deputy V. Li:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Demographic changes really is what we will be looking at for value for money.

[14:30]

Interim Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:
In demographic change, in terms of the changing number of pupils in the school system and how we deliver our system and making sure money is in the right place, that will create the best value for money. Therefore, making sure money is spent for the highest outcomes for children.

Deputy V. Li:
Okay, that is the end of our hearing today. Thank you very much for your time.

[14:30]