



Media Release

For immediate use

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Committee for Education, Sport & Culture Policy Letter on Transforming Education - Mythbusters

There is inevitably and understandably considerable public and political interest in the education proposals which are before the States this week. In the lead up to the debate several myths have arisen about what is and is not being proposed. The Committee for Education, Sport & Culture is publishing this 'mythbusters' document to provide reassurance in response to misconceptions or inaccuracies published in recent weeks.

Myth: Class sizes are increasing

There is no change to the class size policy, in the new model or in the transition period. Recent rumours that St. Sampson's new Y7 intake will have an average class size of 28 compared to 24 last year are completely false. The average class size for the Year 7 intake is 23.9.

Myth: Students will get lost in larger schools

Tutor groups in the new school will be smaller, with an average of 14-15 students. This will ensure every student is known really well. Pastoral structures will be organised according to a "schools within schools" model, with a strong house system. The electives programme will offer a broad range of additional subjects and extra-curricular activities which will allow the curriculum to be tailored to individual needs.

Myth: Students with special educational needs and disabilities will not receive as much support in the new school

Substantial areas have been allocated on both sites to provide support for students with special educational needs and disabilities. These will be larger and will be able to provide more flexible support than the current facilities available across the four sites. There will be bespoke communication and autism support bases on both sites, meaning students needing to access this provision can always attend the college closest to where they live

and transfer to secondary school with their peers. Having these bases in place also means that students with special educational needs can begin their transition to secondary school earlier than other students, allowing for more individual transition plans and support.

Myth: Behaviour and bullying are worse in large schools

Bullying and challenging behaviour can take place in schools of any size. It is the school's approach to it that makes the difference. The school will ensure any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and that disruption to learning is not accepted. The improved pastoral support structures and greater staffing flexibility, including non-teaching staff, will ensure that responses can be quick and appropriate support can be put in place as necessary.

Myth: Students have to stay longer at school every day for more lessons

The proposals include a suggested new curriculum model and timetable. Currently the timetable differs between the Grammar School and the three High Schools, with the Grammar School finishing at 3.30pm and the High Schools at 3.05pm every day. In the proposed model students would finish at 4.05pm on three days per week and 3.05pm on the remaining two days. This will bring the school more in line with the grant-aided colleges. On the three extended days, students will have the opportunity to choose from a broad range of extra curricular opportunities, including arts, sports and additional languages. This will allow every student the opportunity to access high quality extra curricular activities regardless of their personal circumstances or reliance on school transport. This programme will be included as part of the teaching allocation rather than relying on staff to volunteer. This will ensure there is no increase in workload for staff, and that workload is more fairly distributed across the staff body.

Myth: The colleges will be crowded at lunch times

On both college sites, half of the school will have lunch at any one time: this is similar to the current number of students on the St Sampson's site, and the number the Les Beaucamps site was designed for. On the St Sampson's site, where the existing space is smaller, there will be an extension to the canteen. This means the same number of students will have lunch in a larger area, and it will be less crowded than it is now as a result. The Les Beaucamps site already has adequate space. The proposed new pastoral structures will mean there will be closer student supervision and greater opportunities to develop supportive relationships with tutors. There will be lunch time clubs and activities available as there are at the moment, and the proposed model aims to include these as part of teachers' time allocation along with after school activities to ensure a fair distribution of workload across the staff body.

Myth: Students will have to travel offsite for PE more than they do at the moment

The improved facilities on the new sites will ensure that a broader range of sports can be offered to a higher standard than is currently the case: for example, all students will have access to 25m indoor pools and extended multi-use games areas with improved surfaces. Students will still travel offsite to use the best facilities Guernsey has to offer, but the requirement to do so in order to access the range of sports offered will be lower than the current travel requirements across the four schools.

Myth: Teachers have to reapply for their jobs

All teaching staff have been guaranteed a teaching job in the new model. The States of Guernsey (as the employer) will be using a fair and reasonable process to support all staff through the transition to the new 11- 18 School, or The Guernsey Institute. This will include working with recognised Unions, following agreed processes, with an emphasis on causing the minimum of disruption to service delivery and staff. The work is due to commence in early September, following the Policy Letter debate.

Myth: There are no staff rooms in the future colleges

The plans for the new school include a number of “staff bases” for department or faculty groups, as well as a central staff room. At the Les Beaucamps site the existing staff room will remain, and at the St Sampson’s site it will move to become more centrally located. This is in line with the preferences expressed by staff in the consultation survey to create more work areas where staff can work in their subject teams.

Myth: Teachers have to have their lunch with students

Staff will be encouraged to have lunch with students as they are at the moment. This helps to ensure there are shared spaces that are well ordered and calm and for the whole school community can enjoy them together. Staff may choose not to do so and any proposed changes to the current arrangements for lunch duties will involve further discussions with unions.

Myth: The current education system and education standards cannot be improved

Historically our current system has been compared to outcomes in England to determine how well we are performing. The typical benchmark has been the proportion of students achieving five GCSE or equivalent qualifications at A*-C grades, including English and Maths figure. Typically the Bailiwick has performed around or marginally above the English figure, however it has long been argued that Guernsey’s context is different and England as a whole is not representative. A closer analysis against areas that more closely match Guernsey’s demographics suggest that Guernsey has underperformed by comparison.

There is room for improvement in our system: we should be aiming for more for our students.

Myth: This is an unnecessary waste of money

Currently, several of the buildings used for education are not fit for purpose. This includes La Mare de Carteret Primary and Secondary Schools and all three of the College of Further Education campuses at Delancey, Les Coutanchez and Les Ozouets. Significant repairs and upgrading is required at Les Varendes. Any of the various ways secondary and further and higher education could be organised, including having different numbers of schools or using different sites, would involve similar or higher costs to rebuild or improve buildings. It is unacceptable to have students learning in inadequate facilities. Spending money on education is absolutely necessary: we should do it in a way that delivers the greatest benefits to students.

Myth: This is just about saving money

Saving money is not the key driver for change: the aim of the transformation programme is to provide equality of opportunity and the best possible educational provision for every child, regardless of where in the island they live. Consolidation on to a smaller number of sites will however create a number of efficiencies which in turn lead to savings. The Committee proposes to reinvest a substantial proportion of these savings to improve the quality of education.

Myth: These plans are being rushed through

The States have been debating the future structure of secondary and further education for at least the past three-and-a-half years. In January 2018, the States agreed that as soon as possible secondary education should be organised in two 11-18 colleges operating as a single school and that further and higher education providers should be brought together in purpose-built facilities. Since then extensive work has been undertaken to identify the space requirements, building costs and operational costs of the new model. Detailed building and curriculum plans have been put together with inputs from a wide range of staff. The Policy Letter and Business Case are publicly available and provide high levels of detail, in line with or exceeding the level provided at this point in other capital projects of this scale. The building plans have been available to view at several drop in sessions. The propositions ask the States to delegate the release of funds to P&R who will expect even greater levels of detail prior to the release of funds. This does not constitute a rush but careful steps, over a period of over a year and a half, towards considered proposals.

Myth: The Committee for Education, Sport & Culture should have got planning permission for these schools before seeking approval from the States for funding

It does not make sense to proceed with seeking planning permission until the States of Guernsey has approved the funding for the proposals being put forward by the Committee for Education, Sport & Culture. This is in line with other capital programmes which have recently been approved by the States of Guernsey. A recent example of this is the Hospital Modernisation Policy Letter, where planning permission had not yet been agreed at the time of the policy letter debate.

Ends

Notes to Media

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