

Class sizes and pupil teacher ratios

The Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture has previously provided assurances that it has no plans to change the existing average class size policy as part of the States' reforms to secondary education, and this remains the case. All plans for the new 11-18 colleges, including the space requirements for the buildings and the revenue costs, have been calculated based on the existing policy, which states that:

“The default nominal form size in Secondary Schools is 24 children for intake capacity calculation purposes. However, in line with current practice this may be increased to up to 26 children at the discretion of the Director of Education following consultation with the relevant Headteacher.”

This policy determines staffing budgets for each school. For example, increased numbers in the incoming Year 7 cohort in September 2019 compared to last year has meant that an additional class has been added in three of the schools, rather than increasing the size of each class. Schools have been able to hire additional teachers as a result.

The existing policy is used to calculate staffing allocation, but it is rare that students are in classes of exactly 24: currently, some class sizes are significantly lower and others significantly higher. This can be a result of timetabling restrictions that are common in smaller schools; another example of the inequality that exists in our current system. There is likely to be much less variation in class sizes in the new model as it is easier to group larger cohorts into the required numbers.

Schools decide how to group students within each subject. This often varies by year group and by cohort. Where setting is used, it is not uncommon for the sizes of groups to vary to ensure that each student can be taught in a way that best matches their needs. This means that some students are in larger sets, while others are in smaller sets, with the average remaining around 24.

There are some subjects in which smaller group sizes are required: the new model allows group sizes of no more than 20 in subjects including Design and Technology and Food Technology. There is sufficient flexibility for other subjects including Art, Music, Drama and Graphics to reduce class sizes to 20 if this is prioritised by the school.

In Years 10 and 11, it has been assumed that average class size in option subjects will be 20. This will ensure that the curriculum can be kept as broad as possible, with subjects with lower uptake still able to run without making class sizes in other subjects unfeasibly large.

Additional staffing has been allocated to allow duplication of some sixth form groups in order that they can run in both of the 11-18 Colleges. This will mean average class sizes in the sixth form are smaller than they are now.

The existing policy on pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) allocates one teacher for every 15 students in the 11-16 phase. Currently, schools operate with much more generous staffing than this, with PTRs ranging between 1:13.3 and 1:13.8 across the three 11-16 schools. These staffing models are less efficient due to the small size of the schools.

The existing policy allocates one teacher for every ten students in the Sixth Form: given the current ratio of sixth formers to students in the 11-16 phase at the Grammar School and Sixth Form Centre, this would generate a ratio of one teacher for every 11.9 students; the current ratio is 1:11.8.

Averaging across the 11-18 sector, the policy would allocate one teacher for every 13.8 students. The average ratio across England is a teacher for every 16 students. The lower number of students per teacher in Guernsey is primarily driven by smaller average class size.

The new model is less expensive to operate than the current system, without the need for any change to the existing class size policy. However, the Committee is proposing to reinvest some of these savings to hire additional teachers in order to improve the quality of education and range of opportunities that students are offered, taking the ratio to one teacher for every 12.8 students.

Even allowing for the reinvestment of some savings to the benefit of students and teachers, the running costs of the new model of secondary, further and higher education will be at least £1.8million to £2.2million a year less than if no changes were made to the existing model.

The structure of the school will mean that staff time can be used more effectively to benefit students and broaden opportunities. This allows the new model to include the proposed electives (enrichment) programme as part of teaching allocation, instead of relying on staff volunteering their time. This will ensure a fair allocation of workload across all staff and reduce workload for those who currently offer these additional opportunities. This will mean teachers have more time to ensure they are able to have the greatest possible impact on student progress.

Students and teachers will continue to benefit from much more generous staffing than in England, with significantly smaller average class sizes. They will also benefit from the greater flexibility found in larger schools, which will allow additional staff time to be used more effectively than it can be in the current model.