

**REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION, SPORT & CULTURE
TO QUESTIONS ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 14 OF THE RULES OF
PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY GAVIN ST PIER**

Following the announcement that the Communication, Interaction and Autism base supporting primary school-age students will move to Forest School from September this year:

Policy was changed in 2017 from a policy of having one central base at one school¹ to a policy of having access in *each* of the secondary schools.

Question 1a

Has the committee reviewed this policy in primary schools before moving the one base to another single location?

Answer

The Committee has decided to remain within the existing policy of maintaining a single primary Communication, Interaction and Autism Service (CIAS) base. There have been significant developments within the Service which ensure that the needs of a majority of children with communication and interaction difficulties can be met across all primary mainstream schools, meaning there is a requirement for only a single base (for those with more significant needs) to serve the primary school population.

These developments include removing teaching duties from the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinators (SENDCOs) working in each of our schools, so that they have more time to devote to their core duties and to continue to embed inclusive practice as the norm in all of our school settings. All SENDCOs will, in September, obtain the National Award for SENDCOs through Winchester University which will further enhance their skills and practise.

Question 1b

Has the committee changed or is it proposing to change this policy in regard to secondary schools?

Answer

¹ The proposed rebuild of La Mare De Carteret Billet d'état VII 2016 volume 1 envisaged the relocation of a Communication and Autism Base of up to 200m² placed between the two schools on that site to provide a designated unit for up to 18 children in the Primary School and a designated unit for up to 18 children in the High School and to be the base for the provision of outreach services for Bailiwick school age children and for advice to pre-school providers.

As part of the reorganisation of secondary and post 16 education, which is due to be debated at the States Meeting on 14th July 2021, we have committed to developing a CIAS Base on each secondary school site in our proposed model.

Question 1c

Will the change in venue of the base impact on secondary education plans for pupils moving on to the secondary phase of education?

Answer

This will ensure that all children, irrespective of communication and interaction difficulties, will be able to transition with their peers into secondary education confident that their specific needs will be met and supported appropriately. This will be through a range of advice, support and direct input on a frequency appropriate to the specific needs of the young person and will be coordinated through the collaboration between individual schools and the CIAS Team.

Question 2

Was any advice sought from the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN), Autism Guernsey, the Guernsey Disability Alliance or similar experts and interested before the decision was made to relocate? For the avoidance of doubt, will the Committee confirm that it will consult with such interested parties in implementing the recommendations of the recent SEND review or before making any other operational or policy changes impacting SEND students?

Answer

Prior to this decision being made discussions took place between the Head of Inclusion and Services for Children & Schools, Head of the CIAS Service, the Principal Education Psychologist (and respective Educational Psychologists) and Headteachers at Forest and Amherst Primary Schools. All parents affected met personally with the Headteacher of Amherst Primary School and the Head of the CIAS Service and were given the choice to transition their child to Forest Primary School or remain at Amherst Primary School (with existing support) until they transition to secondary school.

We are confident that the decision to relocate the CIAS base will deliver many benefits to young people and their families. The decision took into account a number of factors, not least the poor accommodation, increased pupil numbers and space constraints at Amherst Primary School. However, aside from this the provision that the young people will be moving to will provide:

- improved accommodation within the school building;

- access to a smaller school and thus a less busy and distracting environment for children with communication and interaction difficulties;
- easier access to specific calm outdoor space;
- access, due to its close proximity, to the additional resources available at Le Rondin (if/as required) including the recently refurbished sensory rooms and hydrotherapy pool;
- access to service support at Le Rondin if required (the Head of CIAS Service is based at Le Rondin) as are other services such as Physiotherapy and The Child Development Centre; and
- Forest Primary School has a well-established culture of inclusive practise. As such, staff will be able to support pupils with significant SEND and to understand the needs of pupils with Communication and Interaction needs.

The Committee has committed to ongoing engagement with interested parties as part of its implementation of the recommendations arising from the SEND Review, all of which it has accepted, and will work towards via an implementation plan. The Committee has already engaged with both the Guernsey Disability Alliance Committee and its broader membership via two meetings/presentations and agreed to feedback regularly regarding the progress it is making against the recommendations. This is in addition to monthly meetings between the Guernsey Disability Alliance and officers where developments are discussed.

We have also committed to regular formal feedback via the Disability and Inclusion Board which is a cross-committee political and officer group and includes members from third sector organisations.

As the implementation plan takes shape various stakeholders will be invited to be part of the process of implementation and, through the Guernsey Disability Alliance, we will include members/parents from organisations as appropriate within focus groups and working parties to discuss specific recommendations that most affect them.

Question 3

How will staffing levels change at Amherst and Forest schools respectively?

Answer

Staffing levels at Forest and Amherst schools will not change. Staff associated with the operational aspects of the CIAS Base are attached to the CIAS Service and therefore these staff (as appropriate) will transition to the new facility.

Question 4

How will the increase in pupil numbers at Forest impact on the ongoing primary school review?

Answer

The impact in pupil numbers at Forest as a result of the CIAS Base transferring from Amherst Primary School will not be significantly affected as there are notionally only 12 places available within the base provision across all year groups.

Given the current financial and resource pressures, the Committee is not seeking to progress the Primary Review as part of the initial Government Work Plan prioritisation process. However, when the review is progressed, current and projected pupil numbers will of course be taken into account.

Date of receipt of the Question: 17th May 2021

Date of Reply: 1st June 2021