

**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 LESTER QUERIPEL**

**Preamble**

I was extremely shocked and thoroughly appalled to hear your fellow ESC member, Deputy Cameron, say in the media on December the 28<sup>th</sup>, that due to concerns about students at St Sampsons High School vaping, toilet doors have been removed. So with that in mind, I ask the following Rule 14 questions.

**Question 1**

Who made the decision to remove those toilet doors and why have they been removed?

**Response 1**

There is an important distinction to be made between the doors on **toilet cubicles**, which remain in place and afford every student privacy when using those facilities, and the doors at the **entrance to toilet blocks** (i.e. the doors leading from communal corridors into the space housing multiple toilet cubicles and sinks).

It is the corridor doors at the entrance to the toilet blocks that have been removed, not toilet cubicle doors. This point was confirmed to you verbally by the President of the Committee following the submission of these questions.

It is disappointing that that the media article to which you refer was unclear on this point and so has given rise to unnecessary confusion and concern, not only over which doors were being referred to, but also in respect of the main driver for this change, which was not students vaping.

The decision to remove doors at the entrance to each toilet block was taken at the request of St Sampson's High School's Principal, with the support of the leaders of the Secondary School Partnership. Final agreement was sought from, and given by, the Director of Education and the Head of Education operations to ensure that St Sampson's High School, and all schools in the Secondary School Partnership, are compliant and aligned with relevant policies and approaches taken across all of our schools and settings.

The removal of the entrance doors was considered both necessary and proportionate to bring about improvements in the behaviours of some students, and to improve safeguarding for all students on the site. The decision is part of a wide-ranging set of measures being implemented by the School's Principal and her senior leadership team as a direct response to the findings of the [most recent Ofsted inspection of the School](#) which was published in July 2022.

It should also be noted that it is now common practice, when designing new schools and other buildings associated with the delivery of education, to create toilet block spaces that

are not separated from communal corridors by a door. This type of design has been in place for many years and, in fact, is how the toilet facilities at Les Beaucamps High School were designed and have operated since the school was rebuilt a little over a decade ago.

In light of this, similar modifications have also been made at La Mare de Carteret High School and at the Grammar School, such that none of the four secondary schools now have doors at the entrances to toilet blocks. However, recognising this decision needs to balance the privacy of students with the need for school staff to provide sensitive and discrete supervision of the toilet areas, where there was a direct line of sight from the corridor into a toilet block on any of these sites, a screen/partition has been put in place. This affords students some privacy as they enter the toilet block, but at the same time allows for a greater level of discrete supervision by staff than was previously possible. No screening was needed at St Sampson's High School as there were no 'line of sight' issues.

The decision you refer to was not primarily made due to concerns about students vaping, but was taken to reduce the number of areas on school sites where students can congregate away from the watchful eye of the staff responsible for their supervision. However, it is notable that measures, including this change, have resulted in a decrease in vaping activity which, for the avoidance of any doubt, is prohibited on all school sites.

### **Question 2**

Were the teachers, the students and their parents consulted at any stage?

### **Response 2**

In line with our Education Strategy, we strive to empower school Headteachers/Principals to lead, and we strive to ensure they have appropriate autonomy to make operational decisions for the benefit of their students.

In line with this, it is part and parcel of good leadership to monitor and review the way school sites operate and are used, and to make alterations to the fixtures and fittings of school buildings to bring about operational improvements and efficiencies for the benefit of staff and students. In line with the ethos of the Secondary School Partnership, decisions such as these are taken jointly and, where appropriate, are implemented across the Partnership so that the student experience is broadly similar across all sites.

It would be neither appropriate nor realistic to consult widely on many of the operational changes that take place as a routine part of implementing best practice when running any large site; however, school leaders can – and do – gather both formal and informal feedback from students, and many were expressing their dissatisfaction when the toilet blocks were frequently being used by groups of students other than for their intended purpose.

### **Question 3**

Were Health and Safety consulted?

### **Response 3**

Yes. Health and Safety considerations, including the wellbeing and safeguarding of all students, were paramount in the decision-making process. Staff for the States Property Unit

with Health and Safety training and experience were involved and assessed each toilet block across the secondary schools to ensure that, either as a result of its existing configuration or by the installation of a screen/partition, there is no uninterrupted line of sight into a toilet block following the removal of its entrance door.

As set out above, the changes have aligned the toilet facilities in all of our secondary schools and bring them in line with the build practice that is common in many schools across the UK, where Health and Safety considerations have also been assessed and tested.

Removing the doors at the entrance to toilet blocks reduces the likelihood of poor behaviours and acts as a deterrent for groups of students who might otherwise congregate in these areas when not using the facilities. Given this, the decision to remove the doors was made to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of all students.

#### **Question 4**

Were the members of your committee consulted and has any 'political oversight' been applied to this whole issue?

#### **Response 4**

It is not the role of the Committee to be involved in highly operational decisions such as this. To do so would be to undermine our highly competent, professionally qualified school leaders, whose role is to manage their settings appropriately. That said, in our role as setting Governors, members of the Committee were aware of and supportive of the decision.

#### **Question 5**

Do you and your fellow committee members have any concerns about the invasion of, and the lack of privacy of the students at St Sampsons High School, who are now expected to use toilets that no longer have doors?

#### **Response 5**

No. Given that the doors in question are those at the entrance to the toilet blocks and, as explained above given there is no direct line of sight into the toilet blocks from the corridors, we have no such concerns.

#### **Question 6**

A) If the answer to Question 5 is 'Yes' then can you please tell me what you and your committee will be doing to address the situation? B) If the answer is 'No' then can you please tell me why not?

#### **Response 6**

Please see the response to question 5 above.

#### **Question 7**

Do you and your fellow committee members have any concerns that such an invasive and disrespectful attack on the privacy, and also the dignity of a student when they need to use the toilet, may have an adverse effect on their future mental health in any way?

**Response 7**

For the reasons set out above, we do not consider there to have been any 'invasive and disrespectful attack on the privacy' of students, nor do we consider there to have been any infringement of their dignity, as a result of the removal of the doors at the entrance to the toilet blocks.

For school leaders, the health, safety and wellbeing of all students is always a paramount consideration and, for this reason, where any student has genuine concerns that using these toilet facilities will have a detrimental impact on any aspect of their health and wellbeing, they are encouraged to bring this to the attention of their class tutor or Head of Year (who has pastoral oversight), who will be able to make arrangements for that student to use alternative toilet facilities.

**Question 8**

I am of the view that removing the toilet doors at the school is incredibly disrespectful and an affront to students pride and dignity, so with that in mind, can you tell me please if you and your fellow committee members resonate with my view?

**Response 8**

As explained above, the doors in question are those at the entrance to the toilet blocks and cubicle doors remain – and will always remain – in situ so as to afford all students privacy and dignity when using those facilities; therefore, reflecting the reality of the situation, the Committee does not share your views.

**Question 9**

Can you tell me please how you and your fellow committee members would respond if you were students at St Sampsons High School (or any school for that matter) and you were told the doors on the school toilets had been removed, and that consequently any student using the toilet, had to simply accept that whilst using the toilet, they were going to be in full view of any of their fellow students who happen to be in the toilet at the same time as them?

**Response 9**

As explained in the response to question 1 above, it is the doors at the entrance to the toilet blocks that have been removed. It is common for contemporary school buildings to be designed without doors at the entrance to toilet blocks.

Given this, the Committee expects that, were its Members students at school today, they would respond as the vast majority of students have, which is simply to note the change at the entrance to the toilet blocks, including the 'line of sight' privacy screens that have been provided where needed as an alternative, and to continue to use the individual and private toilet cubicles for their intended purpose, safe in the knowledge that it is much less likely that the space will be used by some students as a place to congregate.

**Question 10**

Can you please tell me what the reaction of your committee would be if every other school in the island decided to remove the doors from their toilets, due to concerns about vaping?

**Response 10**

As set out above, the decision to remove the entrance doors was not only motivated by concerns over an increase in student's vaping. However, the Committee takes no issue with the reasonable decisions of school leaders to make changes to their sites for the benefit of their students. This is the case even in circumstances where the decision is not necessarily well-received by all students, and we have every confidence that all students will be supported to adjust to changes.

**Question 11**

Bearing in mind that students from every one of our schools in the island, also has access to all of our public toilets when they are out and about in the community, are you able to tell me please, will whomever made the decision to remove the doors from the toilets in St Sampsons High School, now be putting in a request to the relevant department, for all of the doors in those public toilets to be removed?

**Response 11**

No, such a request will not be made and, as set out in the response to question 1 above, it is not the cubicle doors that have been removed. However, the Committee notes that it is common practice for many public toilet blocks to have their entrance doors secured in an open position when the blocks are open for public use.

**Date of receipt of the Question: 29<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

**Date of Reply: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023**