

**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**

Preamble

The recent Ofsted Report following their inspection of St. Martin's Primary School reported that,

"Leaders have not precisely defined the important knowledge they want pupils to know and revisit in some curriculum subjects. As a result, teachers do not have the necessary information to plan lesson sequences that progressively develop pupils' knowledge in these subjects. Leaders must ensure that curriculums for all subjects identify the key knowledge that pupils need to learn and in what order. Leaders should also consider how they will check to make sure that pupils remember the intended subject knowledge they need as they move through the school."

Consequently, in the category of "The quality of education" it found that the school "requires improvement."

Question 1

- A. The Committee, through the Office of the Committee, is responsible for the curriculum which States' schools, including St. Martin's Primary, are required to follow, namely, the Big Picture Curriculum, introduced in September 2017. This being so, what responsibility does the Committee feel it carries for the 'quality of education' and curriculum-related deficiencies identified at St. Martin's Primary?

Response 1

Background

Work on the current Bailiwick Curriculum began in 2016 and the new Bailiwick Curriculum was introduced in 2017.

The Bailiwick Curriculum was developed against a backdrop of changes to the National Curriculum in England, and aimed to move provision from a place where there was undue focus on exams rather than the education of the whole child, and where there was no consistency or coherence of curriculum in place between schools and limited opportunities for schools to develop and work together.

To counter this, the Bailiwick Curriculum reiterated the existing four core purposes that should underpin the work in schools: ensuring children become successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors. It also tasked schools with supporting the four outcomes of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), namely,

to ensure that children: are healthy and active; safe and nurtured; included and respected; and reach their individual potential.

The Bailiwick Curriculum was developed by over 200 teachers and leaders, for teachers, with input from education officers, local business leaders and parents and it encompasses a rounded view of education. Alongside academic achievement it also promotes positive mental and physical health, pro-social attitudes, is forward facing, embraces the changing world of work and enables creativity and critical thinking. It took on board feedback from employers who want young people who are 'enthusiastic, confident, creative and resilient and are supported to develop not only the skills and knowledge, but also the attitudes and behaviours that they need to succeed.' *CBI Report 2014*.

Curriculum design operates at different levels of specificity: at national level, curriculum design is typically broad brush (has a low level of specificity) whereas at school level, curriculum design needs to be highly detailed and specific. It is then for individual teachers to adapt the way the school-level detailed curriculum is taught so that it is accessible to individual learners based on their learning needs. For example, at a national level a geography curriculum might say that children should be introduced to the idea that they are linked to the wider world. At a school level this might then be translated to children learning about how pineapples come to be on sale in a Guernsey supermarket within a unit on globalisation taught to a specific year group in the first half of the spring term. At teacher level, this will require the adapted teaching of this topic to meet the range of needs of all learners in the class.

In common with the approach taken in many other jurisdictions, the Bailiwick Curriculum is a 'national government' level document. It provides the broad parameters within which schools should operate, under the autonomy delegated to professionals in schools with regard to curriculum development and implementation.

This is the same approach as is taken with the English National Curriculum; the Curriculum for Wales; and the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence. Giving schools autonomy over curriculum decisions has been policy within the Bailiwick for many years.

Answer

The Committee is accountable (rather than responsible) to the States for all policies developed, actions taken, and services delivered within its remit. Responsibility and accountability for *implementing those* policies and for the quality of service delivery in schools lies with the headteachers/principals of those settings.

The accountability the Committee has for the outcomes of Ofsted inspections, regardless of whether they are favourable or indicate areas needing significant improvement, has to be seen in the light of the operational autonomy schools/settings are given; to suggest

otherwise is to misunderstand the extent of our schools' autonomy. However, the Committee does have a statutory governance function in respect of the education system.

In 2022, the first year of this Committee's tenure that was not heavily dominated by responding to the global pandemic, the Committee took the decision to implement an Interim Governance Model in respect of every States-maintained education setting. In no small part, this was in response to a lack of active governance over many previous years, and to enable the Committee, who had recognised a disparity across settings, to better understand the operational decisions being made in our settings, and the impact these decisions were having on learners.

As has been explained in States Members' briefings, it is not the Committee's intention to continue these interim governance arrangements in the longer term but, until such time as new legislation provides an appropriate alternative governance framework, the Committee cannot leave the active governance function unfulfilled.

Question 2

Given the Committee's central role in the curriculum, as outlined in the previous question, to what extent does the Committee accept that it is partially responsible for Ofsted's judgements and commentary on curriculum-related issues in the school inspections it has carried out and will carry out in the Bailiwick?

Response 2

As per the response to Question 1, the Committee holds overall *accountability*, which is distinct from *responsibility*, for the services within its remit.

Any Committee/body overseeing the development of a broad curriculum policy framework holds overall accountability for the quality of that framework, which is distinct and different from the detailed and operational curriculum/subject content that education professionals in schools select, sequence and deliver within the parameters of the policy framework.

'Curriculum' is an area that is not necessarily developed across a single academic year or political term. It is the responsibility of the current Committee to ensure that appropriate support and evidence-based policy guidance exists in order to enable leaders to engage in dynamic curriculum development and evolution. The answer to Question 4 below outlines how seriously the Committee is responding to that responsibility.

The current Committee agrees with its predecessor Committee that the Ofsted inspection framework provides the best way of championing the values cherished in the Bailiwick Curriculum. Both Committees could have decided to choose a different, less challenging, inspection framework which would have undoubtedly resulted in more favourable

inspection judgements. However, the ethos of both Committees aligned with the vision underpinning Ofsted's framework, recognising it to be in the best interests of all learners in the Bailiwick, even if this might lead to some settings, in the short-term, receiving judgements that were less than 'good'.

One of the priorities of the Education Strategy is to ensure 'outstanding leadership and governance' and this includes a commitment to 'develop a shared culture of trust, honesty, open communication and reflection across the whole education sector that embraces and promotes continuous improvement and accountability at all levels'.

In fulfilling the above commitment, the Committee recognises that it is vitally important for every aspect of each of our education settings to **be** good and not just **look** good. The Committee, through its continued adoption of the Ofsted framework is *accountable* (rather than responsible) for Ofsted's judgements and commentary on curriculum-related issues and is proud that it has had the courage to do what is in the best interests of learners rather than to fall back on a 'softer' approach that might be more politically expedient.

Question 3

What steps is the Committee taking to amend the curriculum or otherwise respond to Ofsted's commentary and finding?

Response 3

When the Bailiwick Curriculum was first being developed in 2016, the shared understanding was that individual schools would select the appropriate knowledge (the subject content) within which the skills (capabilities and dispositions for successful learning) of the Bailiwick Curriculum would be applied. The architects of the Bailiwick Curriculum always envisaged the development of knowledge and greater specificity of content as the next step in its evolution. The Bailiwick Curriculum initially emphasised skills rather than content in order to stress that learning should be purposeful – to enable learners to be able to use what they had learnt to be able to do things and to think critically and creatively, rather than learners knowing disjointed facts with no underlying rationale or purpose. Schools were then tasked with deciding the content that would best enable these skills to be realised and would provide joined up, meaningful learning.

Internationally, there is now a much stronger appreciation of the importance of knowledge alongside skill in enabling learners to think critically and creatively. Locally, this has resulted in a healthy tension between the settings' desire for autonomy in curriculum planning and the need for more detailed guidance about what this knowledge should be.

The SEND Review carried out by nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs) in the Bailiwick which reported in February 2021 also provided further impetus for this development. Recommendation 14 of the SEND Review proposes that schools use the 'SEND in the Mainstream' report written by the Education Endowment Foundation to improve the overall inclusivity of the education system. Recommendation 3 involves schools using explicit instruction approaches to teaching. Such approaches require highly detailed curriculum planning.

In the Bailiwick, and in contrast to the approach in England, Scotland and Wales, a further medium tier of specificity has therefore been developed through curriculum entitlement documents for each subject. Entitlement documents first started to be developed in 2018 by a curriculum development group comprised of officers working with teachers. Work on these paused due to: the need to divert resources to the response to the global pandemic; changes in staff resources; and the change in Committee members following the October 2020 general election, and restarted in January 2022.

The Entitlement documents flesh out in more detail the content within which the skills outlined in the Bailiwick Curriculum should be applied. These documents provide crucial information about progression in each subject and are particularly important in describing progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 (primary to secondary school). They provide more precise definitions of the important knowledge that pupils should know. The Entitlement documents do not remove all autonomy or accountability for curricular decisions from schools. Schools still must make decisions within a Key Stage about which content will be taught in which year group, when, and for how long and for some decisions about finer detail.

It is helpful here to use the previous example of 'pineapples' to better illustrate this:

- The Bailiwick Curriculum sets out the expectation that children should be introduced to the idea that they are linked to the wider world.
- The Geography Entitlement document sets out the expectation that children should:
 1. Know that food comes from many different parts of the world
 2. Know that food has to be transported from where it is grown or reared to where it is eaten
- The school curriculum might specify that children in Year 2 should learn, during the first half of the spring term, about how pineapples come to be on sale in a Guernsey supermarket.

Schools retain considerable autonomy, in this example they decide:

- which foods to study as an example of produce that needs transporting from one country to another
- whether to focus on pineapples rather than green beans or bananas for example
- how many examples to study and in what depth
- when within the Key Stage to study this topic
- which curriculum materials and pedagogical approaches to use

This evolution of the curriculum delivery, while offering less autonomy than originally envisaged, is in line with the evolution described by the Bailiwick Curriculum's authors.

Question 4

Given that an Ofsted finding of “requires improvement” places the school in the bottom quartile of primary schools inspected by Ofsted in this category, what action is the Committee taking to secure improvement?

Response 4

As set out above, and as explained at the States Member’s briefing, the Committee has introduced an Interim Governance Model to enable it to provide closer support and challenge to settings, recognising the need for rapid improvement in some areas.

Additionally, supporting, challenging, advising and validating schools to develop the quality of education in schools has been a major aspect of the work of educationalists within the Education Office in recent years, under both this Committee and its predecessor Committees.

It is helpful to outline this function, by listing what this work, which is ongoing, has involved:

- advising primary schools to modify how they teach early reading through better phonics provision
- advising secondary schools to make the teaching of reading a priority
- advising secondary schools how to support children who are not yet reading at an age-appropriate level to catch up
- changing the assessment policy which was incentivising poor practice and diverting time away from more impactful work
- providing training for school leaders at all levels on the centrality of curriculum development to school improvement
- carrying out curriculum-focused school visits and providing advice to schools on how to further improve
- working with schools directly on curriculum development
- sharing exemplars of high-quality curriculum resources with schools
- encouraging collaboration in curriculum development between schools

- providing training for primary subject leaders directly and through access to online CPD. For example, training this academic year has been provided for primary subject leaders of history, geography, French, art, PE, maths and English
- providing training for schools on inclusive curriculum design that meets the needs of SEND and disadvantaged learners
- providing training for Early Years leaders and Senior Leaders in primary schools on high quality Early Years provision, including ensuring coherence between the Early Years Curriculum and the Bailiwick Curriculum.
- reviewing practice in teaching maths
- developing maths practice in secondary schools and The Guernsey Institute through consultant support
- reviewing the quality of provision in The Guernsey Institute through consultant support
- reviewing the quality of provision in the sixth form through external consultant support
- working with schools to develop curriculum entitlement documents
- having a termly curriculum health check where each school grades the quality of curriculum for each subject and shares this information with officers and governors
- taking school leaders to visit schools in England where curriculum design is high quality
- through the Education Improvement Policy, challenging schools where any aspect of their quality of education is weak, via focused support and challenge meetings

Question 5

Given the use of the curriculum in all States' schools, to what extent does the Committee anticipate that the finding has wider application to other primary schools?

Response 5

The quality of education judgement is a demanding judgement that scrutinises quality in up to 5 areas of learning:

- how well curriculum design is thoughtful and well-implemented
- how well the school enables all learners to read well
- how well the school enables learners to think mathematically
- the extent to which curriculum design enables children with SEND and disadvantaged children to be successful
- where appropriate, the quality of provision in the Early Years (which for schools means in Reception classes) or in the sixth form.

Given the wide-ranging scope of this judgement it is not entirely surprising that it is this aspect of the Ofsted inspection framework where many schools nationally - not just those in the Bailiwick - are aware that most development is needed.

In any given school it is possible that, for example, curriculum design in English, geography and Early Years is strong but curriculum design overall, including in maths, while improving, is inconsistent in some areas, meaning that it is at risk of being judged as not yet quite good enough. In the two primary schools inspected so far, one school, Vale Primary School, was graded as good for quality of education and the other, St Martin's Primary School, as requiring improvement. Currently, a number of settings in the Bailiwick, whether in the primary, or secondary phase, self-evaluate the quality of education in their school as 'requiring improvement' or in a minority of cases as 'inadequate'. Officers agree with this self-evaluation.

While some schools also have areas for development in the other aspects that contribute to the quality of education judgement, the Committee recognises that it is now curriculum design and mathematics which are particularly in need of development in many of our schools; whereas in previous years the focus was predominantly on literacy. All schools, whether primary or secondary, have curriculum development on their school development plans this year. The Committee, though its governance role, is actively ensuring that the focus on this area is sufficiently sharp in all settings.

Some schools already have a well-developed curriculum, some are nearly there, and some have a distance to travel. The actual judgements delivered will depend on which schools are chosen by Ofsted for inspection and when those inspections take place, as improvement is necessarily rapid. A school on the cusp of a 'good' judgement might, for example, be graded as 'requiring improvement' if inspected in January and as 'good' if inspected in May.

It is therefore anticipated that a number of inspections in the current academic year will evaluate the quality of education in that setting as 'requiring improvement', with an 'inadequate' judgement being a possibility for a very small minority of schools.

Date of receipt of the Question: 11th January 2023

Date of Reply: 26th January 2023