

# Big Education Conversation

*What changes, if any, do you think are needed?*

*What are your aspirations for the future of education?*

*What do you think about Jersey's education system?*

*What matters to you most?*

*What will education look like in 20 years?*



# Big Education Conversation Findings Report

## Acknowledgments

Policy officers from the Government of Jersey engaged widely with children and young people throughout the Big Education Conversation. Regardless of their age, background or circumstances, we wanted children and young people to have a say on the issues that affect their education. The contributions they have made are valued, respected and have enriched the findings of this report.

We are also grateful to the parents, families and carers, teachers and teaching support staff, head teachers, leadership teams and governing bodies who took time to meet with us and contribute to the Big Education Conversation. They were honest, personal and, at times, emotional discussions. This report aims to reflect these valuable conversations.

## **Ministerial Foreword**

I am very pleased to present the findings of the Big Education Conversation.

This important project sets out the community's views and aspirations for education in Jersey, from early childhood, through primary and secondary school, into tertiary education and beyond.

Over five months, we spoke with children and young people, parents, teachers along with other interested individuals and organisations across our community. We listened carefully to what they have been telling us and it is clear that there is a lot to be proud of in Jersey's education system:

- our children and young people enjoy learning and want to fulfil their potential;
- we have a passionate and talented workforce committed to learning for all;
- we benefit from schools and education facilities that support a positive learning experience; and
- our academic performance compares positively with other countries.

This is a strong foundation for the future.

But we have also heard that Jersey's education system is facing challenges.

The world around us is changing rapidly, and the knowledge and skills that we require to prosper in work and life are evolving. Jersey's education system must play a significant role in preparing our community for economic and social changes by supporting learning, wellbeing and attainment.

Our community is diverse and children and young people enter the education system with a range of experiences, education needs and abilities. Jersey's education system should respond by offering high-quality adaptable learning opportunities so that every child and young person is able to learn and achieve.

The coronavirus outbreak brought such issues into sharp focus for us. It demonstrated the importance of collaboration and cooperation, and I am proud of how education professionals, children and young people, and parents have responded to the challenge and made sure that learning has continued. It also showed some of the things we need to build on and improve so that Jersey's education system continues to meet the community's needs in the years ahead.

I want to convey my appreciation to everyone who participated in the Big Education Conversation.

As Minister for Education and as a parent myself, it has been an immensely satisfying and valuable task to participate in the Big Education Conversation; to consider the challenges we are facing; and to speak about our ambitions for the future.

In this sense, the Big Education Conversation should not be viewed in isolation but as the beginning of a long-term programme of work aimed at improving education in Jersey. As we look to develop proposals, our approach will remain one of openness and partnership so that everyone who wishes to, can contribute to the future of our education system.

**Senator Tracey Vallois**  
**Minister for Education**

## Response to Covid-19 coronavirus

The Big Education Conversation was carried out by policy officials from the Government of Jersey before the Covid-19 outbreak. This response, therefore, reflects the views of everyone we spoke with before schools were closed in March.

While everyone involved has worked tirelessly to provide a continuity of education for students during the Covid-19 outbreak, the disruption will continue to have an impact on their education for the foreseeable future. This will affect the short- to medium-term priorities for the education system where the focus will be on ensuring that students' health and wellbeing is protected, and their immediate educational needs are being met.

With uncertainty about quite what education will look like in the near future and the challenges that the education system is going to face, it is difficult to say with confidence what the longer-term picture for education in Jersey will be.

However, the experience of Covid-19 and its impact on education brings to the fore many of the issues that were highlighted during the Big Education Conversation. They include:

- The inequalities that some students face in their access to education may have widened for some groups.
- The power of technology to facilitate learning has been recognised through a rapid shift towards using online tools and programmes during the school closures. This demonstrates how these tools have an acceptable and credible future as part of the way students learn and experience education.
- The value of teachers is appreciated more now than ever. Home learning has highlighted how the care and support teachers provide is a fundamental part of students' attainment and success.
- Health and wellbeing were important areas of focus in the Big Education Conversation. They can no longer be considered simply as 'fads'; they are a precondition to success and achievement.
- The Covid-19 outbreak highlighted the importance of vocational subjects and how these are vital to the continuing prosperity of the island. High-quality vocational learning will need to be given a key role in Jersey's education system, particularly as the economic impact of Covid-19 filters through to the labour market.

Acknowledging these issues – many which were identified before the Covid-19 outbreak – and building on recent experiences, will help to set the long-term course and priorities for Jersey's education system.

# Part 1: Overview of the Big Education Conversation

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The Big Education Conversation was launched by the Minister for Education in October 2019 to find out what people think about education in Jersey. We asked the community four important questions:

- What do you think about Jersey's education system?
- What matters to you most?
- What are your aspirations for the future and what changes do you think are needed?
- What will education look like in 20 years?

Responses to these questions are set out in this report.

1.2. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the Big Education Conversation. They have provided a valuable insight into Jersey's education system, informing us about its strengths; the challenges it is facing; the outcomes they want to see for children and young people; and where we need to focus our efforts. In this report, we endeavour to reflect the views of those who took part in a fair and balanced way.

1.3. The Big Education Conversation is the first stage in a review of Jersey's education system. Its findings will enable the Minister for Education to determine priorities for the education system and consider the wider set of conditions – i.e. the policy, funding, legislative and structural – that must be in place to deliver those priorities.

1.4. The Minister is committed to sustained public dialogue throughout the next stages of the review to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be involved in and shape the future of Jersey's education system.

## 2. Background

2.1. The Minister for Education wants Jersey's education system to be among the world's best, achieving successful educational outcomes for all students. As a prosperous island, there is no reason why this is not achievable.

2.2. Jersey's education system is currently working well for many students who are going on to succeed in work and life. They can access and participate in high-quality learning opportunities at all stages and levels of their education, supported by parents, carers and families, schools and teachers and a range of other actors across the community who are committed to their achievement. These are successes that must be nurtured and celebrated.

2.3. However, Jersey's education system is not working as well as it could be for everyone. This has been highlighted during the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak. There are too many students whose backgrounds or personal circumstances are creating barriers to their accessing and successfully participating in education. This is having a detrimental effect on their educational achievement and progression, and, as a result, their life chances.

2.4. The Minister for Education is committed to ensuring that Jersey's education system provides accessible, quality and equitable learning opportunities for all students, which enables them to achieve successful educational outcomes. However, the education

system is encountering high demand in many areas that affect its ability to achieve these outcomes, including:

**Advances in technology**

Technology is changing the types of jobs we do and the skills we need to do them. Low-skilled jobs could become less prevalent, and highly skilled employees are in demand. Technology also creates opportunities for new innovative ways of teaching and learning. However, there is a risk that advances in technology may outpace the education system's ability to adapt and provide the knowledge and skills that people need for work and life.

**Diverse experiences**

Children and young people come from increasingly diverse backgrounds and have very different life experiences. A *'one-size fits all'* approach to education does not adequately reflect the circumstances and the educational needs and aspirations of each individual student. Members of the community are calling upon an education system that can provide tailored forms of support and provision for all students to help them fulfil their potential.

**Demographic changes**

People are living longer and are needing to remain in active employment for longer as a result. The education system must enable people to access learning opportunities such as options to re-train and gain new skills throughout their lifetime.

**The global environment**

Today's students are expected to thrive in a global environment, competing internationally for jobs and dealing with a multitude of complex social issues at a worldwide scale. The education system must equip students with the knowledge and skills to take advantage of the opportunities that a globally-connected environment creates, and to navigate the new social pressures this brings with it.

- 2.5. Jersey's education system must respond to these demands to ensure that it remains relevant and is able to make the most of the opportunities they provide. There is both an immediate need for this – to address existing pressures in the education system – and a long-term need to put in place the conditions to deliver a high-performing education system.
- 2.6. It is the Government of Jersey's role to lead on this, drawing awareness to the demands that are being placed on the education system; explaining clearly the reasons why the education system must change; and articulating a common vision for the future of education in Jersey.
- 2.7. This is why the Minister for Education launched the Big Education Conversation. There are potential wide-ranging and far-reaching implications for Jersey's education system for years to come. It is, therefore, essential that everyone – students; parents, carers and families; schools and teachers; businesses; voluntary and community organisations; and other services and agencies – has a voice and helps to shape the future of Jersey's education system from the outset.
- 2.8. The Big Education Conversation is the first stage in a review of Jersey's education system. By finding out what people think about the education system and what they want it to look like in the future, the Big Education Conversation has set the foundations

for determining the priorities for the education system and decisions about how they can be achieved.

### 3. Strategic context

3.1. The education system contributes to a broad set of social, economic and cultural outcomes that the Government of Jersey wants to achieve for the island:

#### **Statement of Common Strategic Policy 2019-2023<sup>1</sup>**

- Put children first – *by protecting and supporting children, by improving their educational outcomes and by involving and engaging children in decisions that affect their everyday lives*
- Create a sustainable, vibrant economy and skilled local workforce – *by improving skills in the local workforce to reduce Jersey’s reliance on inward migration*
- Improve wellbeing and mental and physical health – *by supporting people to live healthy and active lives; by improving the quality and access to mental health services; and by putting patients, families and carers at the heart of Jersey’s health and care system*
- Reduce income inequality and improve the standard of living – *by improving social inclusion and by removing barriers to and at work*

#### **Children and Young People’s Plan 2019-2023<sup>2</sup>**

The Children and Young People’s Plan aims to ensure that Jersey is the best place to grow up for children and young people and also improves their everyday lives.

Its vision is that “*all children should have an equal opportunity to be safe, flourish and fulfil their potential*”.

There are four outcome areas:

- Grow up safely – *children feel part of a loving family and a community that cares*
- Learn and achieve – *children have the best start in life and go on to achieve their full potential*
- Live a healthy life – *children enjoy the best health and wellbeing possible*
- Be valued and involved – *children have a say in the decisions that affect their everyday lives, regardless of where they live or the school they go to*

The plan is underpinned by three ‘passions’:

- Protecting children’s rights – *continually checking that our practice and progress is Rights Respecting as part of our commitment to the United Nations Convention.*

<sup>1</sup> Government of Jersey’s Statement of Common Strategic Policy 2019-2023  
<https://www.gov.je/Government/PlanningPerformance/CommonStrategicPolicy/Pages/CommonStrategicPolicy>

<sup>2</sup> Children and Young People’s Plan 2019-2023  
<https://www.gov.je/Caring/Children/ChildrensServicesImprovementPlan/ChildrensPlan/Pages/ChildrensPlan2019>

- Reducing inequalities – *some children in Jersey will need more support to achieve the life chances that we want for all children growing up in the island*
- Promoting wellbeing – *build on children’s and family strengths; practitioners work in partnerships with families recognising and promoting resilience and helping them to build their capabilities*

### **Future Jersey<sup>3</sup>**

Future Jersey is the island’s long-term community vision, which describes the ideal future that islanders want for Jersey. Future Jersey includes the outcome *‘learn and grow’*.

This is about ensuring children and young people grow up in an island that provides the opportunities they need to achieve their potential, by being ready for, and succeeding in, school. It includes the ambitions to:

- Improve children’s early year’s development
- Improve educational achievement
- Improve educational progress
- Improve opportunities for school leavers

## **4. Methodology**

4.1. The Minister for Education made a commitment to engage widely with people and organisations involved in education. Between October 2019 and February 2020, policy officials from the Government of Jersey met with:

- children and young people
- youth centres
- adult learners
- parents, carers and families
- teachers and support staff
- head teachers
- school and college governing bodies
- teachers’ unions
- businesses and business representative groups
- voluntary and community organisations
- officials from the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills

7.2. They have all made important contributions to the Big Education Conversation and have informed the findings of this report. The table at Appendix 1 provides a summary of who we engaged with and how.

7.3. The Big Education Conversation also held independent focus groups with parents, teachers and teaching staff, which included sample representatives from primary and secondary schools, and fee and non-fee-paying schools. Each focus group lasted for 90 to 110 minutes. The breakdown of the groups is as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Future Jersey <https://www.gov.je/government/planningperformance/governmentperformance/futurejersey>



- 5 groups of parents and carers comprising 8 people in each group.
  - 1 group included parents whose children were in fee-paying schools primary and secondary only;
  - 1 group included parents whose children were in Government non-fee-paying schools only;
  - 3 groups included mix of all parents.
- 4 groups of teachers comprising 8 people in each group.
  - The groups included teachers and teaching staff working in early years; primary and secondary school staff; and included teachers and staff from fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools and colleges.

7.4. Finally, public drop-in sessions were held at the 2019 Jersey Skills Show; Customer and Local Services; Highlands College; Jersey Library; the Philip Maurant Centre; and Les Quennevais Sports Centre. Islanders were also invited to share their views online. 290 people completed our online survey and others made comments via email, social media posts and in writing.

7.5. Valuable input has also been received from the Department for Children, Young People and Education. Themes have been tested from the report with departmental officers with wide and varied experiences of Jersey's education system.

7.6. As well as carrying out its own research, the Big Education Conversation worked with other groups whose work helped to inform the research process, including the Early Years Policy Development Board<sup>4</sup>, the Post-16 Strategy for Jersey<sup>5</sup>, and the Independent School Funding Review. The alignment of the Big Education Conversation with these initiatives is explained in section 9.

7.7. To help bring together and analyse this information, we applied a thematic framework to the responses. This has made it possible to identify emerging issues and key themes, which we have begun to explore in this report. These themes provide the structure for findings in this report.

## 8. Scope

8.1. The Big Education Conversation covered the following stages of education and settings:

Age & stage: early childhood education; primary education; secondary education; post-16 education; higher education; adult learning.

Education settings: States fee-paying and non-fee paying primary and secondary schools; private schools; the transfer of students to Hautlieu at ages 14 and 16; post-16 academic and vocational education at Highlands College; education and support for children with special needs and disabilities (SEND); additional resource centres; and adult-learning.

<sup>4</sup> Early Years Policy Development Board

<https://www.gov.je/Government/PolicyDevelopmentBoards/pages/earlyyearsdevelopmentboard>

<sup>5</sup> Post-16 Strategy for Jersey

<https://www.gov.je/Government/Pages/StatesReports.aspx?ReportID=4963>

## 9. Next steps

- 9.1. The Big Education Conversation is the first step in a review of Jersey's education system. It sits alongside the Early Years Policy Development Board and the Post-16 Strategy for Jersey. These initiatives provide a policy agenda that is focused on early childhood development; improving educational attainment and progression; and opportunities for school leavers. These support decisions about the priorities for education and areas where we will need to focus resources in the years ahead.
- 9.2. The alignment of these initiatives provides an overarching view of Jersey's education system and not just its component parts. This enables links to be made between the different stages and levels of the education system, and the ways they work together to support successful educational outcomes.
- 9.3. A series of enabling conditions also need to be in place. They include an effective legislative environment; accountability arrangements; high-quality teachers and leadership; data and evidence; infrastructure; and funding and resources. Each of these areas will be examined during the next stages of the review.
- 9.4. Work on funding and resource requirements is already underway. The Independent School Funding Review will support decisions about the funding and resources that the education system requires to ensure its sustainability, and where funding is best targeted to maximise the impact on educational outcomes.
- 9.5. Together, this programme of work will lead to proposals for:
  - immediate actions that can get underway in the next year;
  - medium-term actions over the next three years or more; and
  - larger reviews that make proposals for long-term changes to Jersey's education system, which may take 10 or more years to fully implement.
- 9.6. Where the findings of the Big Education Conversation could result in fundamental changes to Jersey's education system, proposals will require in-depth work and can only be achieved over a much longer period of time with sufficient capacity and resources. It will also require the efforts of many people involved in education to develop and implement those changes, including opportunities for detailed public consultation on the proposals.

## Part 2: Findings of the Big Education Conversation

### 1. Aspirations for Jersey's education system

1.1. The Big Education Conversation heard a consistent message from the community that they want Jersey to have a high-quality and world-leading education system. A *'high-performing'* and *'world-leading'* education system is one that provides each and every student – including children and young people, and adult learners – with the opportunity to:

- acquire the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need for work and life;
- have a strong grounding in literacy and numeracy, and digital skills;
- become well-rounded and resilient individuals with strong social and emotional skills; and
- be active citizens who are ready to participate in and shape the world.

1.2. In discussion, many of the people we spoke with pointed to examples of what they thought are high-performing education systems in other countries. They would like Jersey to look outward beyond the UK and take inspiration from countries such as Finland, New Zealand and Singapore, and adapt successful policies and practices to Jersey's education system.

#### What the community said

***"I do feel that it [Jersey's education system] is following the lead from the UK unnecessarily and to save face where we could be looking to more successful models for inspiration such as Finland's"*** – teacher, online comment,

***"I wish it was like Germany or France where there are far less posh private schools because the government schools are so good that you would not even consider them for your children"*** – parent, online comment

***"Jersey needs to stop blindly following the UK system"*** – primary school teacher, January 2020

***"Jersey has every opportunity to be the best in the world. We are apparently a 'rich' island. The children are the future and all we do is get 'experts' over from the UK; of which has a huge teaching crisis, failing schools and poor data compared to other similar countries. However, it would seem we don't have the courage to go our own way and follow the Scandinavians' approach"*** – teacher, online comment

***"Jersey needs to look wider than UK and takes best parts of other educational systems that work, e.g. Finland"*** – parent, online comment

***"The education system is running on goodwill – when you entrust your child into the education system, you primarily hope that they will be valued and treated with respect"*** – parent, online comment

1.3. Our discussion drew frequently on the themes of *'access,' 'quality'* and *'equity'* in students' learning opportunities. Jersey, we heard, must set itself high expectations for its education system and aspire for all students to achieve successful educational

outcomes regardless of their background or personal circumstances, or the stage or level of education they are at.

1.4. However, the Big Education Conversation was told that Jersey's education system is not, at present, meeting all students' needs and, as a result, enabling them to learn and achieve. It was observed that:

- There are obstacles that prevent some students from having access to, and participating fully in, education. These include students with special education needs and disabilities; those whose first language is not English; disadvantaged groups with low socioeconomic status; and children and young people with care experiences.
- The education system has not responded effectively to new social pressures or changing labour market conditions. Students may lack the knowledge and skills that are required in today's global environment. As a result, many students were felt to be ill-prepared for work and life outside education or may be disengaged from education such that they are *'present in school but not learning'*.
- There is a middle group of students who are seen as *'good enough'* but have flat-lined in their performance. They are not necessarily performing badly but could achieve more if they were adequately challenged and engaged in education.
- The Big Education Conversation heard from all the people and organisations we spoke with about the need for system-level policies to support successful educational outcomes for all students. There was no single policy or practice suggested to us that could improve Jersey's education system; rather it was felt that a range of policies, funding, and structural features of the education system should be targeted.

1.5. The following were suggested as areas of focus for structural-level policies:

- Adequate funding and resources for education targeted at areas of greatest need.
- Support for teachers and strengthening the quality of teaching.
- High-quality, relevant and tailored learning opportunities for students with clear routes of progression through the education system.
- School autonomy supported by appropriate governance and accountability.
- Opportunities for collaboration at all levels of the education system.
- Measures to ensure that parents and a range of other agencies are actively involved and participate in students' education.

These are all considered separately as themes in this report.

1.6. Finally, there is acknowledgement that Jersey's education system has significant structural complexities and sensitivities, many which are culturally ingrained, that must be addressed to improve the education system. This, we were informed, is reinforced by *'short-termism'* in the education system and a lack of coherence in decision-making.

1.7. To this end, those we spoke with said there is a need for strong political leadership to generate understanding of the nature and extent of the problems that need to be addressed, the capacity and resources required to do so, and to articulate a long-term vision for Jersey's education system.

## 2. Funding and resources

2.1. Access to funding and resources in Jersey's education system was a key theme that emerged from the Big Education Conversation. The Big Education Conversation was informed about the two elements to this:

- a) Without adequate funding and resources, targeted at the areas of greatest need, there is an immediate risk that Jersey's education will fall into decline and fail to meet students' existing educational needs.
- b) Jersey cannot start to think about delivering a high-performing world-leading education system unless it addresses immediate funding and resource challenges. Only when there is a sustainable, long-term settlement for the education system would it then be possible to consider long-term aspirations for the future of education.

2.2. A majority of schools told us that the funding system is inequitable and distributed unfairly between schools and different sectors. Non-fee-paying primary and secondary schools, for example, do not think that they are on a level-playing field with fee-paying schools in terms of access to per-pupil spend; buildings and facilities; and additional learning opportunities. Some schools also have difficulty in accessing basic material for students such as books and stationery.

2.3. They also told the Big Education Conversation that funding should be focused on 'need' so that schools that demonstrate high levels of need attract adequate levels of funding to meet those needs. For example, schools who accommodate a high proportion of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), English as an Additional Language, and include students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was felt that, in these circumstances, the current way in which funding and resources are structured is inadequate to manage the type and level of needs that schools encounter among students.

2.4. Teachers and head teachers were of the opinion that immediate funding pressures made it difficult to provide an adequate education for all students, and there was a limited amount of room to focus on improving their educational outcomes. They felt that the starting point must be to acknowledge the pressures that schools are currently facing and provide a level of funding that is sustainable, gives stability and supports current provision for all students.

### What young people said

There is recognition among young people that their schools are facing funding pressures.

For example, those in Government of Jersey secondary schools spoke about how they often did not have access to stationery; their text books were old and worn; and teachers could sometimes not provide printed copies of learning material.

Young people were concerned that, although some students have access to a range of resources and services, others do not and lack basic provision in school. They wanted schools to have more funding and resources so that everyone has equal opportunities to learn and achieve.

There is also a level of dissatisfaction among young people about the quality of their learning environments; some students are learning in school buildings that are old and run-down, and although young people recognise that schools try their best, they feel that some schools receive more investment for 'nice to haves' as opposed to basic infrastructure. This impacts on students' engagement and whether they feel like their education is valued. Good-quality playgrounds are also important so that students have access to appropriate outdoor space.

### What the community said

***“The level of funding for special education needs provision is not sufficient. While schools are making efforts to be inclusive, the lack of support for mainstream schools set SEN children up to fail”*** – Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“I would hope that the government invest time and money into education over the next few years otherwise it is not looking good for our future generation”*** – parent, online comment

***“More money to support children and teachers with resourcing”*** – teacher, online comment

***“The funding model needs to ensure equality for all”*** – teacher, online comment

***“Teachers spend £100s of their own money buying resources”*** – retired teacher, online comment

***“The inclusive system is at breaking point due to chronic under-funding a lack of resources for SEND. Schools need to be funded correctly so that children with additional needs are welcomed rather than seen to be an issue due to lack of resources”*** – member of the public, online comment

## 3. Overview of school stages

3.1. Each stage and level of Jersey's education system is felt to have strengths and weaknesses. Students; parents and carers; and teachers, head teachers and school governing bodies told the Big Education Conversation about some of these, as summarised below:

### Early Years Foundation Stage – pre-school and reception (ages 3-5)

The importance of high-quality early years experiences and environments was a strong theme throughout the Big Education Conversation. This covers the learning, care and development that has a positive impact on children throughout their formative years.

Teachers, especially, told us that positive experiences of early childhood have an effect on a child's ability to learn at school and provide the basis for a child's future academic attainment and progression, physical health, and their wellbeing.

For some people we spoke with, early years, equates to early intervention and must be prioritised to ensure that a child's personal circumstances, such as a low-quality home learning environment, do not impede their learning and development outcomes.

We heard that funding and resources should focus on early years support and services. This includes high-quality pre-school and nursery settings (such as outdoor and play-based learning); investment in a well-trained and qualified workforce; appropriate and timely child health and developmental checks; and parental guidance and support.

### **Key Stage 1 – years 1 and 2 (ages 5-7)**

Teachers are concerned about children who are joining primary school lacking in basic social and communication capabilities, and literacy and numeracy skills. This is felt to create a gap in their educational attainment and progression that is difficult to bridge as they move through school.

There is also concern that the expectations placed on children between 5 and 7 years old are too great as they transfer from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 1. This is a period when a child is still developing fast and changes to their routine – as they move to more formal styles of teaching and learning – can be unsettling. This has an impact on their educational attainment and progression and may lead to some children starting to fall behind at an early age.

Some parents have concerns about the readiness of their summer-born children to join primary school. There should be consideration as to how we can design the curriculum to improve outcomes for summer-born children and whether it would be appropriate to allow greater flexibility in start dates.

Parents also said they would like better managed transitions from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1, ensuring a gradual change in teaching style and learning content. There is a desire for play-based learning to continue up to age 7, following learning styles from other nations such as Finland.

Primary school teachers felt that there was an opportunity for enhanced joint-working with pre-schools to support the transition process early on (e.g. information sharing) in order to anticipate and prepare for children's learning needs.

### **Key Stage 2 – years 3-6 (ages 7-11)**

The main issue for primary schools is the inclusion in mainstream settings of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or complex behavioural needs. There is concern that funding is inadequate to meet the needs of all children.

Some parents and teachers voiced concern about the academic pressure on children at this age, including Year 6 National curriculum tests (previously known as SATs). Most parents and children felt comfortably and equipped for the transition from primary to secondary school, noting that most schools have introduced targeted strategies and resources to support students move from one to the other. It was noted that there were good examples of practice already:



- Le Rocquier operates ‘Little Rocq’ within the main school for Year 7 students;
- Haute Vallée operates ‘Horizons’; and
- De La Salle College prepares primary school students for secondary school in Year 6 through a gradual transition from one to multiple teachers and grouping subjects into broader thematic areas.

### **Key Stage 3 – years -9 (ages 11-14)**

Among teachers there is felt to be an ‘*expectation gap*’ between year 6 attainment and the skills required in Year 7, including notably some students not reaching the expected standards in literacy and numeracy. Moreover, there is a view that a cohort of ‘middle’ students are ‘coasting’ and failing to be stretched and fulfil their potential.

### **Key Stage 4 – years 10-11 (ages 14-16)**

The non-fee-paying secondary schools, in particular, feel the impact of the 14+ transfer to Hautlieu strongly and are concerned about the effect on students who do not make the move. There is concern about the effect this has on school’s ability to provide a range of GCSE curriculum options and extra-curricular opportunities.

### **Key Stage 5 – years 12-13 (ages 17-18)**

There is a desire to see joint working and collaboration between schools to strengthen educational pathways and opportunities for students to study a wider range of courses, including academic and vocational education and training.

### **Further and higher education (Post-16)**

There is a need for high-quality vocational education and training options for students alongside academic options linked to employer needs.

### **Adult learning**

It is considered vital to see education not only as a ‘*life stage*’ but as something people need to engage with throughout their lives. There is an economic and social imperative to this – to upskill for personal development; reskill for a career change; and raise basic skills proficiency such as numeracy and literacy to improve access to employment. Adult learning also has an important role to play in preventing social isolation for some members of the community.

## **4. Access and Inclusion**

- 4.1. The Big Education Conversation heard that students and parents want Jersey’s education system to provide accessible, quality and equitable learning opportunities for all students. An important component of achieving this goal is to ensure that the education system is ‘*inclusive*’ so that all students, at every level of attainment, and across every stage and level of education have access to equal opportunities to learn and achieve.
- 4.2. ‘*Inclusion*’ is a broad term and refers to more than any one group of students. We heard in the course of the Big Education Conversation that Jersey’s population is diverse and, as a result, children and young people enter the education system from a range of backgrounds, and life circumstances which will continue to have an impact throughout a



lifetime of learning. This will affect their educational needs, interests and aspirations and determines how the education system needs to respond to this challenge effectively.

- 4.3. We heard, therefore, that it is important that each and every student is able to access and participate in education at any stage and level, and they receive quality learning experiences in order to achieve successful learning outcomes. However, there is a clear recognition of the need to improve levels of inclusion for a number of specific groups of students in Jersey's education system who, for a variety of reasons, we were told are not to be performing as well as they could be.
- 4.4. We were told that a number of different groups may be at risk from having full access and participation in education. This is based on factors including:
- disability;
  - behavioural and emotional issues; and
  - socio-economic issues
- 4.5. In this context, we heard that few people are aware of a clear Government of Jersey stance or policy on inclusion in the education system. While there was overwhelming support for inclusion as a principle, and there is a great deal of inclusive practice in Jersey's schools already, there was concern about the practicalities. The structure of the education system and funding pressures led to schools not being prepared or able to provide sufficient teaching and learning practices that are adapted to meet the range of needs that students present in schools and classrooms.
- 4.6. The introduction of the Jersey Premium was viewed by some as being successful in closing the gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Others saw it as a way of plugging a funding gap, with spend not necessarily having a direct benefit on the intended pupils. There was support for building on this success by increasing the premium to enable schools to close the gap in attainment further. And building in processes that clearly demonstrate how young people benefit from the spend.
- 4.7. The Big Education Conversation acknowledges that every child and young person has their own personal experiences of Jersey's education system and may have their own particular barriers to accessing learning opportunities. Overall, we heard support for further work to identify the types and level of different needs in the education system, and to determine the range of responses. Some of the suggestions we heard included:
- a flexible curriculum that can be tailored to the individual and diversity in learning outcomes;
  - alternative forms of assessment;
  - distribution of resources to schools that better meet the level of need;
  - more teachers and support staff who are trained in providing inclusive education and support; and
  - access to specialist school staff; and timely and appropriate support from professionals.

### **What young people said**

Equity was viewed as a key factor contributing to success among students. A large number of children and young people commented about equitable access to high-quality learning and referred to the importance of "all" or "every" student being welcomed into education and having an equal chance to learn and achieve. Their comments also consistently expressed the sentiment that every student should be

treated with the same respect and offered the same chance to succeed in education as others.

A large number of children and young people discussed disability and learning support, with all wanting easier access and more support for those who needed it. They thought that no one should fall behind because of a disability or learning difficulty.

While there is strong recognition that schools should be inclusive places, it was acknowledged that making schools inclusive environments creates challenges in classroom settings, if the right level of support and resources are not available. They want more support for students with additional needs to learn and thrive at school.

### **What the community said**

***“Jersey’s education system is not inclusive enough. It needs to identify young people’s individual talents and encourage them in those areas”*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“The education system does not provide equal opportunities for all children. It should be fairer and ensure equal access to opportunities, including those with special education needs”*** – parent, online comment

***“Some children are missing out on vital education because there is simply not enough support for their needs. SEN (special educational needs) children in mainstream schools do not have the required support to have a proper education. There is little/no support to help with severe behavioural needs”*** – teacher, online comment

***“Address inclusion. It is not fair that the education of so many is so hugely effected by an outdated notion of equality that in reality isn’t met in schools any way”*** – teacher, online comment

- 4.8. The following are examples of groups of children and young people the Big Education Conversation spoke with specifically about their experiences of Jersey’s education system. It is important to note, however, that consideration of inclusion should encompass a wide-range of characteristics, including gender, race, sexual orientation, and social background. Any policy response must view inclusion in these broad terms.

### **Special Educational needs and disabilities (SEND)**

By far the most consistent issue raised with the Big Education Conversation from parents and carers, and schools and teachers, was regarding the pressures faced by schools to adequately meet the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This related specifically to the level of funding, resources and specialist support available for students, and the challenges of accessing that provision.

We heard that many children and young people with SEND feel their needs are well met by mainstream schools. Where it works well, there is early identification of a child’s needs; a strong voice for children and parents in education; close co-operation between schools, families and all agencies involved; and full access to an appropriate curriculum.

However, many parents we spoke with reported having experienced practical problems in accessing the help they need, and mainstream services are not always organised in a way that is easy to access. Parents told us about the impact of this:

- Parents feel they have to advocate strongly for support in their child's education and for access to SEND provision. The notion of 'fighting' for access and help was a consistent experience for these parents.
- There was a view that the current system is '*bureaucratic*' and requires significant levels of knowledge, personal and social capital, and resilience to successfully navigate. Some parents do not know what help exists or where to go for it, relying on charitable organisations to provide them with support and advocacy. As a result, there is concern that many parents and carers are not in a position to advocate for their children, which leads to inequitable access to services and support.
- At a personal level, the emotional toll of the 'fight' to access support for SEND children is often a lonely and stressful experience for parents. It puts a significant strain on their mental health and wellbeing and on all aspects of family life.

Parents, professionals and young people acknowledge that there are limited options for alternative education, and limited options for alternative settings (beyond Mont a L'Abbe and La Sente). While the clear majority believe in inclusive education in Jersey, most feel that the aspiration for inclusive education is not supported by structure or funding. This, in turn, prevents the system from being truly inclusive. A lack of resources – both in terms of funding and professional support – created disadvantage on both sides – those with special educational needs, and the other students in a class.

The challenges that the Big Education Conversation heard in relation to SEND provision in Jersey's education system can be summarised as follows:

- A lack of available specialist staff, e.g. Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and highly skilled teaching assistants.
- Not enough training for teachers (both mainstream and SENCOs), head teachers and teaching assistants about how to support SEND students.
- Teachers, while supporting the principle of inclusion, question its feasibility. It is unrealistic on teachers to be able to meet the needs of SEND students within their classroom setting given factors such as class-size (and multiple students with SEND needs); a lack of support in the classroom; competing demands to teach other students; and a lack of training of SEND and inclusion. This can have an immense personal impact on teachers.
- The separation of certain students from classroom settings and exclusion from other activities as a result of the perceived risk or disruption they create to students can create a negative spiral for the young person and the teaching environment.
- Inadequate strategies to address low-level challenges or behavioural issues.

- It can be a difficult process attempting to access appropriate SEND provision. There are delays in diagnosis; long waiting times for assessments because of pressures on resources; multiple assessments; and incorrect diagnoses.
- In some instances, funding is being used from core school budgets to support high-need students, which detracts from the funding for broader school provision.

Moreover, we heard from parents and schools that children and young people are facing challenges in accessing timely and appropriate support from a range of other professional services such as Educational Psychologists; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS); and speech and language therapy. We heard that SEND provision was only as good as the teachers and professionals involved in providing support (and they capacity they had to carry out this role effectively.). However, a lack of joined-up support and coordination was creating barriers to learning among the children and young people who require these services.

Parents and professionals expressed a desire for more fluidity in the system, and adequate support, so that students could move more easily up and down scales of support. And that the curriculum could be tailored to the needs of individuals, so that real progress could be achieved, even if not at 'age-expected' levels.

### **Children and young people in care or with care experience**

The Big Education Conversation spoke with children and young people who are in care or have experience of care regarding the particular challenges associated with their education. We heard how this group of students often feel like they are missing out on their education and their life chances are being restricted, as they lack appropriate support and stability (at home and in school) to succeed in their education.

Young people supported by Barnardo's in Jersey, for example, expressed a view that the education system appears to be "a one-way street" with limited opportunity to review each individual student's educational needs, or to take account of their personal circumstances and the effect this has on their learning experience and achievement. They believe that schools and teachers must show greater understanding and empathy towards children and young people who have care experience. This includes tailored teaching and learning practices; and support for students who encounter any form of trauma or difficult personal circumstances during their education.

### **Young carers**

The Big Education Conversation met young carers - young people under the age of 18 who provide care for another person such as a parent or member of their family who is ill, disabled or struggles with substance misuse - at the My Time for young carers at Grands Vaux Youth Centre, part of the Jersey Youth Service's offer for young carers. Often, we heard, these young people will be caring for relatives without their teachers' knowledge, as they do not realise they are a carer or do not wish to draw attention to their caring role.

As a result, it can be difficult to identify young carers and provide appropriate support in school. However, the caring role they provide and their unique experiences impact on their ability to learn and achieve in school. We were informed about the

detrimental impact that a lack of support at school can have on a young carer, including poor attendance; a lack of ability to engage in lessons or complete homework; poor attainment and progression; and adverse health and wellbeing.

In some instances, young people spoke about a lack of understanding from schools about their caring responsibilities. They were given after-school detentions (which they could not attend because of their caring role) for being late, despite having to care for a parent or drop off a younger sibling at primary school; or for not completing homework. Some carers had also experienced bullying because of their perceived 'difference'; and many had low-self-esteem or lacked motivation to learn as a result of the challenges associated with their home life, which was not conducive to participating or engaging successfully in education.

There was a view that schools should focus on developing more effective support for young carers to meet their needs, including measures to ensure that teachers could identify young carers and provide support; monitor and track their attendance, attainment and progression, and wellbeing; and embed a wider culture of recognition for young carers in school settings.

### **Complex behaviour and exclusions**

In the course of the Big Education Conversation, we also heard about the challenge schools experienced addressing challenging behaviour among some students. Our discussions, not only with teachers and head teachers but with students and parents, highlighted the importance of schools being able to effectively deal with disruptive behaviour. It was stressed that school environments must be calm, safe and orderly so to enable teaching and learning to take place effectively. There was a view that it was not inclusive practice to have a minority of students disrupt the education of other students in their class.

There was agreement that head teachers must be supported to establish strong behavioural cultures in their schools, including the ability to make use of exclusion where appropriate. However, there was equally a view among students and parents, that behavioural policies must be used fairly and consistently, with exclusions used only as a last resort, and that in-school exclusions could be used more productively.

There was a degree of consensus that many examples of poor and disruptive behaviour can be dealt with through preventative measures, including support to understand and respond to the root causes of this behaviour, such as personal circumstances that require additional and professional support.

It was noted by head teachers we spoke with that excluding a student from school (either for a period of time or permanently) is a necessary sanction but should be used effectively with head teachers supported to make difficult decisions by the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, and given the tools to do so well and with consistency. There was also concern over the high levels of exclusion in the island.

Moreover, we heard that exclusion should not be a reason for a student to be left out of education altogether, and schools should work to address the barriers to placing them back into mainstream settings, for example, through intensive forms of support or more tailored teaching and learning opportunities. High-quality alternative provision should be available if students are unable to be educated in a mainstream setting.

## What the community said

***“Getting children help and support in school is a heavy burden on parents and carers. It puts strain on family life, and we [parents and carers] are left feeling like we are fighting for scraps of support”*** – parent, Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“Finding an appropriate school for my child has been a minefield. Access to the Educational Psychology Team is a battle”*** – parent, Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“Many teachers do good work in supporting children with special educational needs and do their best to provide support. However, teachers need more support themselves to help children and greater training and guidance”*** – parent, Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“There is inadequate support in the mainstream, which sets out children up for failure”*** – parent, Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“Children are falling through the cracks because of a lack of awareness and support”*** – parent, Jersey Parent Carer Forum event, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“Ensure better CPD for staff; teachers also need to spend less time on non-teaching tasks and more time on ensuring quality first teaching and learning”*** – teacher, online comment

## 5. Teaching and support staff

### Teachers

- 5.1. The Big Education Conversation heard how students’ learning and attainment is influenced by many factors, but we heard a consistent message from everyone we spoke with that the quality of a students’ education depends on the quality of their teachers. If Jersey wants to create a high-performing education system that is among the world’s best, then nothing matters more than giving every student access to the best possible teachers.
- 5.2. We met teachers who are passionate, driven and committed to their vocation. They are outstanding professionals dedicated to helping students learn, achieve and fulfil their potential. Students themselves recognise this. They told us that high-quality teachers are vital for their educational success. They also recognise that teachers are facing significant pressures with their workload and dealing with issues in the classroom, while supporting every student to learn.
- 5.3. The Big Education Conversation had open and honest conversations with students and parents about the quality of teaching in Jersey’s schools. They told us that a “good” teacher was “knowledgeable” and “passionate” about the things they taught. Students thought that a good teacher, while having a strong approach to managing students’ behaviour, was fair and consistent in the way they treated students. A good teacher also provided support and encouragement, recognising if a student needed additional help.
- 5.4. We heard that there was a lot to celebrate about the teaching profession in Jersey. However, we also saw for ourselves that we demand a lot from our teachers. We heard



from teachers about how they are going above what appears in their job descriptions to support students with their learning and attainment. We spoke with teachers, in an open, honest and often emotional manner, about the challenges they and the teaching profession are experiencing. These include:

### Challenges facing teachers and the teaching profession

- Teaching students with special educational needs and complex behavioural issues – it is felt that teachers do not have all the tools or support to be able to support these students properly in a mainstream classroom setting; this can be disruptive to other students' learning and harmful for the student whose needs are not being adequately met.
- The pressure and management of their workload and the expectations of schools, parents and the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills. A lack of resources can impact on the ability to teach effectively, some teachers pay out of their own pocket for classroom resources.
- A lack of access to or support from agencies and services offered by CYPES (recognising the pressures these services are dealing with themselves).
- Few opportunities for continuous professional development and insufficient time and resources provided for teachers to take up what is available at present.
- Limited opportunities for career progression and development paths for progressing into leadership roles, especially at primary school level.
- Shortages of teaching staff, including teaching assistants, technical and support staff.
- Difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified and quality teachers – the cost of living and issues such as access to housing; and employment for spouses.
- Head teachers said that they lack autonomy to employ staff. There is frustration about declaring headcount rather than looking at the needs of the schools and students.

5.5. The quality of teachers, trainers and tutors is key for effective learning – be that in early childhood education and care, schools, vocational education and training (VET), or adult education. We heard about the specific issues challenges at different levels of the education system:

- **Early Childhood Education:** there is a lack of recognition of the value of a well-trained and qualified Early Years workforce; limited options for professional development and remuneration.
- **Schools:** large numbers of new teachers leaving the profession and the difficulty of attracting and retaining teachers, especially at town primary schools.
- **Vocational Education:** teachers and tutors are not treated with equal value. Tutors are qualified and undertake further education teacher training, but their qualification is not recognised to teach in school-settings.

- 5.6. Teachers reported high levels of workload, which were only manageable because of the long hours they work and the time they use during school holidays to prepare and catch-up from previous terms. The common reasons for a high workload were administration; dealing with special educational needs; safeguarding matters; marking and assessment; lesson planning and attending meetings. It was noted that these are important and necessary aspect of school life, but the volume of time available to teachers made it unmanageable and, as a result, they felt constrained or unable to fulfil their core purpose of teaching.
- 5.7. The personal impact of these challenges were also reported to us. Teachers said that their workload, and the pressures it placed on them, was detrimental to their family relationships to the extent that they were unable to have an appropriate work-life balance. In some cases, we heard this had led to marriage breakdowns. It also caused stress, depression and anxiety among teachers, and a lack of motivation in their job, and yet they were always expected to “give 100%” to their students. This, in turn, also had implications for teachers’ own mental health and wellbeing and the quality of their teaching.
- 5.8. Moreover, the teachers we spoke with were frustrated by a perceived lack of trust in them as professionals and a sense they were not empowered to take ownership over the teaching and learning that takes place in their classrooms. They told us that the demands placed on them by the curriculum meant they did not feel able to do what they believed to be right for students or readily tailor how they teach to reflect the needs of individual students – in terms of the pace, content and style of teaching provided to students. We were informed that many teachers want to have greater professional autonomy in their work and be trusted with their responsibilities. This needs to be backed-up by appropriate professional accountability and constructive support and feedback to identify their own performance and needs.
- 5.9. A number of teachers we spoke with drew the distinction between their feelings towards the individual school at which they taught and the education system as a whole. While most teachers we spoke with said they had supportive working conditions within school, including support from colleagues and senior leaders, they were dissatisfied with the broader education system for the reasons observed already, as well as their perception of inadequate central leadership and direction from the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills.
- 5.10. However, it should be noted that this opinion was not shared universally, and other teachers told us that they felt there was not a clear message from headteachers and school leadership that their time and effort was valued.
- 5.11. For these reasons, too, the Big Education Conversation heard concern about teachers leaving the profession. While a certain level of teachers leaving the profession is inevitable, there was concern that high rates of teachers leaving their positions served to compound problems by causing schools disruption; the loss of skills and expertise; and adversely affecting the quality of teaching and learning.
- 5.12. However, the Big Education was told that, with the right support and resources, the status of the teaching profession could be raised, which, in turn, would help to attract the brightest and best applicants, and encourage high-quality, long-serving teachers to stay. This included good employment and working terms and conditions; opportunities for learning and career development; and public trust and recognition. Some potential mechanisms suggested to us that could strengthen the selection, reward and development of teachers included:



- Improve initial teacher education and provide opportunities for continuous professional development so that teachers are able to acquire and retain knowledge and skills required to meet students' needs. At each stage of a teacher's career, and especially as they move into leadership positions, offer training and development and provide opportunities for career progression, removing 'flat' career paths.
- Create more opportunities for peer support and development. Maximise the talent and experience on-Island by freeing up those teachers to play a role in training or mentoring those who need additional support.
- Enable teachers to study up to master's degree level as a condition of employment and provide sufficient time for them to develop and practice their professional learning and research. This would put Jersey in line with other high-performing education systems, which require teachers to have this level of qualification.
- Increase the funding, resources and support available to schools to help students with the most significant special educational needs and behavioural issues.
- Reduce or remove unnecessary administration and bureaucracy. In particular, we heard that HR systems for recruitment are difficult and restrictive for schools. There is limited administration support in schools to manage tasks such as data protection, finances, and health and safety. There was a lot of support for introducing a business manager role to more schools, which would help to reduce teacher workload and increase their professional time with students.
- Explore opportunities to reform the school environment in which teachers work – such as working time; staff-student ratios; and employment and working conditions.
- Improve the offer for teachers coming to Jersey so to improve the recruitment situation for subjects with shortages – e.g. accommodation and access to employment for spouses.

5.13. The Big Education Conversation heard that the effectiveness of the education system depends on the quality of teachers. The most successful countries with high-performing education systems, including in East Asia and Nordic countries, all recognise the value of teachers. We believe that we must place greater importance on attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce of teachers. We must pursue the goal of making the teaching profession a desirable career choice; raising the bar for entry into the profession; granting teachers greater autonomy over their work; and control in the classroom; and employment and working conditions that respect and value the role of teachers.

### **What young people said**

Young people viewed teachers as having an integral role in providing them with a high-quality education.

They recognise the pressures that teachers face and are concerned about the effect this has on teachers' wellbeing and, as a result, the impact on students' learning. They were in favour of greater support for teachers so that teachers can get on and do what they are supposed to do: teach.

The Big Education Conversation asked young people the question "what do you think makes a good teacher?" Their responses included:

- A substantial number of students described the teachers they want as being kind, caring, fair, supportive and understanding.
- They want teachers to be interested in them as a person and, in turn, they will respond in kind.
- A large number of young people commented on how teachers' attitudes influence how a student feels about their time at school and their interest in learning. Teachers who enjoy teaching are passionate about the subject they teach; are relatable; show genuine interest in a student's education and are a positive influence on students' engagement and learning.
- There is a recognition though that teachers must be firm and that discipline must be targeted fairly, proportionately and consistently. It was important that teachers treat everyone equally, do not show favouritism and make time for everyone.
- They want teachers to understand individual ways of learning and have time to help every student on an individual level. This includes understanding diverse backgrounds and life circumstances and being supportive and emphatic of those.

Additional classroom support in the form of teaching assistants was requested by a number of children and young people. This was seen as enabling teachers to spend more time supporting the whole of a class, with teaching assistants providing support for individuals.

### **Teaching support staff**

5.14. The Big Education Conversation heard from teachers and students how teaching assistants and other support staff in this workforce are making an immense difference to schools in terms of teaching and learning. We were told, for example, how teaching assistants, especially in primary schools, free up teacher time by providing one-to-one support for individual students who might need some additional help, allowing teachers to focus on the whole classroom.

5.15. However, there is a view that there are too few teaching assistants currently employed to meet the level of students' needs in schools or spread around too many schools who may not have the same level of need as others.

5.16. We heard consistently about the challenges being faced by teaching assistants in schools. Many teachers, for example, felt that it was unacceptable for teaching assistants not to have secure working conditions or pay that reflected the type and amount of work they do as they often work long hours outside what they are contracted to do. Teaching assistants also told us that they would like improved access to training, and employment and career development opportunities that reflect the increasing prominent and complex roles they play in schools.

### **School leadership**

5.17. School leadership is an important element of the teaching profession and essential for delivering excellence in Jersey's schools. We were told by students, parents and teachers how head teachers (with the support of senior leadership teams) are instrumental in creating effective learning environments, that motivate and stretch

students to learn and achieve, and support teachers to deliver high-quality teaching and learning.

5.18. We also saw how, working with the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills, school leaders can bridge the gap between policy and practical delivery in schools. The ability to draw on and mobilise their knowledge and experience was noted as being of critical importance in designing and implementing the potential changes to Jersey's education system that will result from this work.

5.19. At the same time, it was recognised that school leadership roles are highly demanding. The changing nature of education and the challenges it is facing means that the expectations, accountabilities and responsibilities of leadership roles are evolving. As a result, we heard from head teachers and senior leaders that they require central support and access to their own continuous professional development opportunities so that they have the knowledge, skills, capabilities and mentoring to run schools effectively.

### **School boards of governors**

5.20. We also met school governors. We heard how boards of school governors, where they are appointed in Jersey's schools, take on voluntary roles, dedicating their spare time to promote and guide schools in their work, drive improvements; and support teachers and head teachers in their work.

5.21. There was also a need to ensure that governing bodies have clarity in respect of their roles, responsibilities and accountability. For some, there was a view that governors do not always receive the recognition or support they require. They would like appropriate training to carry out the roles expected of them effectively. For some, their role was clear, but they lacked a legislative basis to support their work.

#### **What the community said**

***“Teachers should have greater autonomy to teach and be empowered to use their pedagogy in the way they believe is appropriate for students to learn and achieve”*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“There are some amazing teachers out there who are unable to educate pupils because they are busy fighting fire in their classroom, managing behaviour and supporting high levels of needs (some highly complex), with limited human resources and a system that requires endless hoops to be jumped through”*** – parent, online comment

***“Teachers need to be continued to be valued in order to keep good educators in the profession”*** – teacher, online comment

***“Education in Jersey is good but at the cost of overworked teachers. Teachers need more time to prepare to provide good quality opportunities for pupils. Teachers cannot keep up with demands for raising standards if support and resource are not in place”*** – teacher, online comment

***“You know a good teacher...no matter the subject, they inspire, and the kids love their classes. Invest in those teachers you want to retain and pay them better. Make it the best job in the world”*** – parent, online comment

***“We want happy, well-remunerated teachers who have good options for career progression and CPD and inspiring, pastoral leadership”*** – parent, online comment

## 6. Organisation and governance

- 6.1. The organisation and governance of Jersey’s education system determines its structure and operation. It covers issues such as the bodies that may provide compulsory education (both public and private bodies); their relationship with the Government of Jersey; the degree of autonomy they have over resources and decision-making; and the standards by which they are held accountable.
- 6.2. The Big Education Conversation heard about a perceived lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of different actors and agencies in Jersey’s education system. There is a strong desire for certain roles and expectations of functions to be more clearly defined; to articulate who has responsibility for what areas; where there is any legal requirement of duty and clarity over relationships, including:
- the role of the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills
  - the relationship between maintained fee-paying schools with CYPES
  - the role of fee-paying schools within the wider education system
  - the role and expectations of parents and teachers
  - the role of schools and other agencies in early help and additional welfare support to students
- 6.3. Many head teachers and senior leaders expressed a wish for more freedom and autonomy for schools. This includes providing more opportunities for decisions to be made at a school level. However, in giving more autonomy there was a view that stronger public policy needs to be in place, such that there were clear guidelines for schools in delivering Government education policy, and mechanisms for Government to hold them to account for the delivery of these policies.
- 6.4. When school leaders were asked about what “greater autonomy” meant, their responses reflected a wish for greater flexibility or control over funding, HR processes, and property maintenance. One area where this played out was in terms of giving schools multi-year budgets so that they had an opportunity to hold reserves and plan ahead, rather than spending all their budget before the end of the financial year. This was not possible, we heard, under the current formula-based approach as a school’s budget is dependent on the number of students and their particular needs.
- 6.5. There was a view that the introduction of governing bodies for all schools should be looked at as an option to strengthen oversight arrangements for schools and ensure they are using their resources correctly. However, ultimate statutory responsibility for education should remain with the Minister for Education.
- 6.6. We heard that some of the fee-paying schools would also like greater levels of autonomy – in particular, the ability to set their fees at levels they consider appropriate for their needs. Moreover, there should be clarity on the role and status of fee-paying schools and the level of autonomy that they have – there is an appetite for reviewing the current arrangements and the extent of Government support.
- 6.7. We heard from parents that they want clear information about the performance of Jersey’s schools. They want the information to help them monitor their children’s progression and attainment, and the performance of a school in terms of how it serves

all its students. We were told that the accountability arrangements must be robust and independent to create trust and confidence in the quality of education and in the outcomes being delivered.

- 6.8. While parents want to hold schools accountable for their performance, they acknowledge that accountability arrangements must serve a useful purpose. This includes to challenge underperformance in schools, but also to drive improvements in the quality of education. Parents told us that accountability arrangements must not create burdensome or arbitrary processes that disenfranchise teachers and detract from the core role of schools to teach.
- 6.9. We heard similar views in speaking with teachers, head teachers and governors. In general, they recognise the need for accountability arrangements through tools such as inspections and teacher appraisals to assess and evaluate school performance. They agree that effective accountability provides a mechanism for constructive challenge and feedback, which plays a key role in school improvement and teacher development.
- 6.10. However, there is concern that accountability arrangements are not, necessarily, targeted towards the benefit of schools. They create stress and anxiety; increase teachers' workload; and may use narrow criteria (a 'box-ticking' exercise) to measure performance, which does not take account of the value added by schools in other areas. As a result, there was a view from teachers, head teachers and governors that arrangements must be fair, effective and strike the right balance between accountability and autonomy and trust.
- 6.11. The Jersey Schools Review Framework was introduced in September 2019 as a tool to assess the quality of education in all Government of Jersey primary and secondary schools<sup>6</sup>. Three school reviews had been published at the time of the Big Education Conversation, with all schools expected to have been reviewed by the end of 2022.
- 6.12. It was recognised that the Jersey Schools Review Framework is in its infancy. While we heard that awareness of the Review Framework was low among parents, schools were beginning to understand how the process works as reviews began to be published.
- 6.13. Head teachers and school leaders supported the Review Framework as a proportionate mechanism to review school performance and improve the quality of education. There was concern that it might not judge schools effectively on their context and there was the view that it should provide a mechanism to support schools, post-evaluation.
- 6.14. Teachers thought that the process was at times stressful, and they were not given the opportunity to demonstrate their teaching in context. There was also concern that the Review Framework would have a demoralising effect on schools who received poor reviews when performance could be the result of broader systematic factors outside of their control such as insufficient funding and resources.

#### **What the community said**

***“So much time is wasted in schools in the name of ‘review’ rather than being spent addressing the needs of pupils. This is the opposite of putting children first!”*** – teacher, online comment

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<sup>6</sup> Jersey School Review Framework <https://www.gov.je/education/schools/childlearning/pages/jerseyschoolsreviewframework.aspx>

***“There’s too much interference. Too much following UK guidelines and goal setting. Too many inspections, often guised as other things such as moderating which takes up a huge amount of time compiling paperwork” – retired teacher, online comment***

## 7. The curriculum

7.1. The curriculum is the basis for students’ learning at all stages and levels of their education. At the start of this report, we said that the community wants Jersey’s education system to provide all students with the opportunity to:

- acquire the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need for work and life;
- have a strong grounding in literacy and numeracy, and digital skills;
- become well-rounded and resilient individuals with strong social and emotional skills; and
- be active citizens who are ready to participate in and shape the world.

The design of Jersey’s curriculum, as a key driver in students’ learning, and their engagement and experience of education, is vital to the achievement of these educational outcomes.

7.2. The Big Education Conversation heard strong support throughout the community for Jersey to have a broad, robust, relevant and inclusive curriculum, including associated assessment arrangements. We asked students, parents and carers, and teachers for their views on what these 4 principles meant in terms of the design of the curriculum. They told us:

### **A ‘broad’ curriculum enables students to:**

- Take a variety of subjects, both academic and vocational education and training, that is suitable for their strengths, interests and aspirations.
- Acquire a range of skills, knowledge and capabilities they need for work and life.
- Develop ‘*soft skills*’ – e.g. critical-thinking, problem-solving, empathy, collaboration and communication skills.

Access a rich learning experience, including arts, drama, language, music and sports, which complement academic and knowledge and technical skills.

### **A ‘robust’ curriculum enables students to:**

- Master core knowledge and skills such as English, maths and science and associated literacy and numeracy skills.
- Develop a deep understanding of content.

### **A ‘relevant’ curriculum enables students to:**

- Develop knowledge and skills that are aligned with economic and social imperatives, which are aligned with the needs of the labour market.
- Learn about wider social issues such as politics, citizenship and the environment.



- Apply their knowledge and skills in real-life situations.

**An 'inclusive' curriculum enables all students to:**

- Learn and achieve through all stages of education, from early years, through primary and secondary school, and into tertiary education.
- Provide high-quality learning opportunities at all stages of education, and in all types of education, for example:
  - In early years education focus on building early literacy and numeracy skills.
  - In primary school provide a foundation knowledge in English, maths and a range of other subjects.
  - In secondary school, provide a breadth of learning opportunities so that students can make informed choices about their future study and employment options.
  - In tertiary education provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to access career opportunities, which are aligned with the needs of employers. It is also important to ensure equivalence between academic study and vocational education and training.
- Access a flexible curriculum adapted to meet the needs of students with a wide-range of abilities, interests and aspirations.

7.3. Although the majority of those we spoke with supported these principles, there were a range of divergent views about whether they were reflected in the current curriculum, or how they might be reflected in the content and scope of the curriculum in the years ahead. There was a perceptible difference, for example, between the expectations of students and parents, and the views of schools and teachers about what the curriculum should cover. This is summarised as follows:

- Teachers tend to be in favour of the current curriculum and do not want to change it. They want consistency and coherence in the curriculum, emphasising the amount of time it takes to introduce new content and initiatives, and the resources it takes.
- Teachers need to cover a large amount of subject-content so prioritising breadth over depth does not allow students to master core knowledge and skills, or a deep understanding of the content. The incorporation of specific demands into learning might respond to the types of knowledge and skills required today, but they may become rapidly obsolete in the future.
- They were of the view that the curriculum could not cover every area of learning and there was a risk of "curriculum overload". A greater focus should be placed on subjects such as English, maths and science. It is felt that these subjects are the foundation for high-quality learning, enabling students to achieve a strong grounding in literacy and numeracy. It was observed that '*getting the basics right*' had the greatest impact on learning and achievement. A focus on core knowledge supported students to develop interdisciplinary skills that could be transferred and applied to multiple contexts and situations.

- A large number of students, parents and businesses we spoke with want a radical departure from the curriculum that currently exists. They expressed a view that the English curriculum is *'broken'* and there is a need to be bold and follow what high-performing education system around the world are doing such as Singapore and Finland. This view was also supported by some teachers.
- We heard a number of times in discussion that many subjects were 'irrelevant' because *"you can just look it up on Google"*. While academic knowledge and skills are important, there is a view that it should be relevant to real-life situations and, moreover, supplemented by the teaching of 'life' or 'soft' skills, which are aligned to the needs of employers and help students succeed in work and life.
- There was support from everyone we spoke with that literacy and numeracy skills are crucial to life chances and should be the principal focus of the education system.

- 7.4. Ultimately, there is a recognition that choices around the curriculum are difficult to make, reflecting the changing nature of educational needs. The Big Education Conversation heard often contradictory views about what the focus of the curriculum should be, or what trade-offs were needed between the breadth and depth of the curriculum. These are choices that reflect Jersey's priorities for its education system, and the knowledge, skills and capabilities students should be taught and at what age, balanced against the resources that are required to provide instruction.
- 7.5. In addition, the amount of homework students receive was a continuous topic of discussion as part of the Big Education Conversation, specifically among students and parents. There were polemic views on the issue; either that there is too much or too little homework.
- 7.6. Many students indicated that they felt as if they receive too much homework. This interferes with activities such as sports, family interaction and opportunities to socialise with friends. This made them feel tired and, at times, stressed. The alternative view, notably from parents, is that students do not receive enough or sufficiently stretching homework, or that there are inconsistent approaches towards homework between different schools and lessons.
- 7.7. There was a view from teachers that homework is an important element of learning, and schools generally seek to coordinate students' homework timetables to ensure that students receive an adequate but manageable amount of homework. However, there was a recognition that the purpose and value of homework should be clarified with students and parents.
- 7.8. Advances in technology are revolutionising work and life, yet – although some schools were successfully incorporating the use of technology into classrooms – we heard that many were lagging behind. There was acknowledgment that digital technology is embedded in some schools already, but it should be used to facilitate innovation in curriculum content and learning as opposed to simply supporting existing practices.
- 7.9. We were told by students, parents, teachers and employers that technology already plays a significant part in children and young people's lives, supporting their learning; friendships; creativity; and offering entertainment. Schools must, therefore, keep pace with the adoption and effective use of digital technology so that students develop the skills they require to use it positively and safely for their future work and lives.



- 7.10. Digital literacy is a key skill in today's education system so schools should engage positively with technology in teaching and learning. The key barriers identified were a lack of digital infrastructure provided in schools; and that teachers lacked sufficient skills, time and resources to use technology and incorporate it effectively into their lessons.

### **What young people said**

Young people want a broad and relevant education in a range of subjects that prepare them for the future – in education, employment and in life. This includes academic knowledge, as well as life and personal skills.

English, maths and science are seen as the basis of a 'good' education, enabling students to learn the numeracy and literacy skills they will need for success in future work and life. They recognise these are core subjects upon which other knowledge and skills are dependent, but they want the subject content and material to be relevant and applicable to everyday life.

Some young people welcomed the opportunity to learn about Jersey's language, history and heritage, and the influence they have on the island's culture today. They also think it is important to have knowledge about cultural diversity and cultural-related issues in society to promote understanding, respect and acceptance of others.

Life skills included a number of areas – social skills; relational skills; emotional intelligence; the ability to communicate and interact effectively with others, as well as being resilient to meet challenges in a changing world - were all deemed essential to students' success in life. These were seen as part of a high-quality education. They also include skills such as how to get a job; how to look after themselves physically and mentally; how to manage finances; cooking and nutrition; and how to actively engage and participate in citizenship such as knowledge about rights, laws and politics.

Young people want opportunities to learn about wider societal issues such as rights, political engagement and the environment. This helps students to understand their roles and responsibilities, develop a sense of citizenship, and make a positive contribution to the community.

They believe that creative subjects such as dance, drama, music and art and design are vital parts of their learning experience. They enable students to express themselves creatively and promote creative knowledge and technical skills that are valuable in future work and life.

Young people recognise the importance of technology and want more opportunities to use it in schools. They see how rapid advances in technology are changing the world around them and appreciate the need to be capable and confident using technology.

They also spoke about the importance of extra-curricular activities like sports to give a well-rounded education and encourage students to pursue their own interests.

Young people also expressed the opinion that students need to be taught in a way that has relevance to the "real world" such as learning in an applied manner and knowing how the curriculum will be useful to them in future work and life. They said

that understanding the relevance of what is being taught is important to student engagement.

There was a view that schools do not adequately equip students with the skills they need for life outside of school and to prosper in the real world. There was concern that the things they learn as part of the curriculum are not relevant and will not be used in later life.

In order to learn, there was a view among students that a one-size-fits-all approach to learning does not work. Instead, schools should foster students' interests and help students access types of learning that work best for them and their personal strengths.

There was concern about the pressure of assessments and exams. It was observed that students often feel stressed because of assessments and scores were not, in their view, an adequate way of measuring attainment or progression. There was acknowledgment that some assessment is necessary to ensure students are on track, but there should be alternative methods of measuring whether a student is staying on track rather than 'teaching to the test'.

#### **What the community said**

***"Schools will need to provide an education that will allow students to be 'future ready' and to develop and use relevant knowledge, skills and values as 'change agents' in a society which is challenged by increasing environmental, social and economic demands, including a desire for increased sustainability"*** – trustees of Beaulieu Convent School, written submission

***"Students learn in different ways yet approaches to learning and teaching have not kept pace with the individual needs of students"*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***"The education system is too generic – our focus is on measurement and there is no room for creativity and flexible approaches to education that would be more suited to some students"*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***"The education system is not brave enough...there was an opportunity to be brave with the curriculum"*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***"Young people need to have life skills – an understanding of what it is like to work; digital skills; communication skills and English and maths skills. Learning is not just about knowledge but learning behaviours that can be translated into the work environment"*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***"Too much is packed into the curriculum, teachers are expected to deliver and meet all the curriculum which contains far too much. Nothing is dealt with in detail and very little is revisited to consolidate learning. New initiatives are launched all the time without embedding what has gone before"*** – secondary school teacher

***“Practical subjects and skills are being withdrawn and overlooked, particularly in primary schools, due to funding, lack of teacher skill and confidence and because of the sheer volume of academic material they have to get through”*** – primary school parent

***“ICT is taught in isolation in schools without making it relevant to industries and what the requirements are. Modern industry is becoming more and more digitalised, however, the facilities, hardware and software available in schools just does not match what is used in business”*** – employer, Highlands College Open Evening, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019

***“Teach children to be rounded individuals, not linear thinking exam passing groups”*** – teacher, online comment

***“The primary curriculum is inaccessible to a high number of pupils and is inappropriate for preparing young people for either secondary education or future employment”*** – teacher, online comment

***“We need to look at different approaches to teaching...not all children can learn by sitting in a classroom conforming...all children are different, and the education system should recognise this”*** – parent, online comment

***“Children need more time to read. Too much is crammed into the curriculum”*** – retired teacher, online comment

***“Pupils needs to receive a core academic background and then progress to learning that best suits them and their ambitions”*** – member of the public, online comment

***“Children’s different learning styles need to be catered for – the curriculum is outdated, and teaching methods only suit a small number of children”*** – parent, online comment

***“Children should be given a basic ability to learn, to enjoy learning and become lifelong learners. We are not so bothered about achievements, grades and awards or the pursuit of excellence at the expense of the child’s ability to be a child and to learn through playful interaction with the world around them”*** – parent, online comment

***“There should be much less teaching to the test and more adaptive teaching styles, which reflect different learning styles. Emphasis on skills readiness for digital and global business sectors”*** – parent, online comment

***“There needs to be a continued focus on wellbeing and communication skills, and a reengagement with the arts and importance of creativity”*** – teacher, online comment

***“Change the way we measure success – realise that passing exams is but one form of measurement and often the process towards achieving high results stifles creativity, the arts and the development of life-long learners. Focus on teaching pedagogy in science and maths that ensures first principles are taught and tricks are avoided”*** – teacher, online comment

## 8. Choice and learning opportunities

8.1. Parents spoke about the importance of there being options to choose which schools their children attend. It was observed that Jersey had a broad selection of schools:

- States fee-paying primary and secondary schools;
- States non-fee-paying primary and secondary schools;
- Private fee-paying schools;
- Hautlieu for students at either age 14 and 16
- Post-16 academic and vocational education and training at Highlands College

8.2. This level of choice was generally welcomed by parents who said that Jersey benefited from a diversity of options from which they can choose a school that best meets their child's needs such as the perceived quality of education; pedagogy or academic focus. It was noted, however, that many parents focused on the quality of education. They were supportive of fee-paying schools because they were not satisfied with the Government non-fee-paying schools and were, as a result, willing to pay fees so that their children could receive what, in their view, amounted to a better-quality education.

8.3. It was noted that school choice could only be exercised by families who could afford to pay or had made that decision despite the financial pressure it caused them. However, the idea of choice was, in other parents' views, meaningless for a large proportion of students, especially those from low-income households, who had no alternative option but to attend their local States-run primary and secondary school. While the quality of these schools was seen, on the whole, as being 'good' and 'satisfactory,' there was concern that levels of differentiation, even between the Government non-fee-paying schools, had an impact on the quality of education in Jersey.

8.4. A distinction can be made between different types and stages of education:

- The majority of Government non-fee-paying primary schools were seen as good-quality but a distinction was made between urban and rural settings.
- The quality of Government non-fee-paying secondary schools were viewed less favourably.

8.5. Some parents and teachers did perceive a potential 'life-long' disadvantage through lack of choice. This is in relation to access to fee-paying (and faith-based) schools, as well as lack of choice in catchment area schools. This sentiment was sometimes reinforced through GCSE subject options available from Key Stage 4 onwards being location-dependent.

8.6. We also spoke with Jersey's Catholic schools, and students who attended those schools and their parents, about faith-based education. They told us that they valued the opportunities provided by faith-based schools and the Christian education and values they promoted. It was a matter of concern that less-affluent Catholic families are denied the option to provide their children with a faith-based education, or must struggle financially in order to do so, because as it is only provided by fee-paying schools.

8.7. Moreover, even when parents were willing to exercise choice, we were told that the choice that they wanted to make for their children was not available in Jersey. For example, some parents felt strongly that there was demand for a private, co-educational secondary school, to which St. George's and St. Michael's would effectively become feeder schools. Parents wanted the opportunity for their children to attend a school with what they considered to be a different type of learning environment, where attainment

levels and progression was not measured by grades alone. At present, this choice did not exist in Jersey.

- 8.8. The Big Education Conversation also noted that the structure of secondary education in Jersey is deeply rooted and valued by many. However, while there are those who see it as effective, providing students with choice and benefitting their learning, others consider it socially divisive and question whether the structure provides equality of opportunity for all students.

### **The 14+ Transfer**

Those who spoke in support of the 14+ transfer said:

- It provides access for the brightest students to a high-quality learning experience without paying fees.
- Students feel 'stretched' and motivated in their learning.
- Students value the opportunity to study with other academically-minded students and the chance to build new friendship groups.
- It enables social mobility by offering students from less-affluent backgrounds the opportunities of high-quality GCSE and A-Level studies.
- There are benefits for the students who remain in the 11-16 States-non-fee-paying secondary schools as teaching and learning can be better targeted to their needs.

Those who spoke against the 14+ transfer said:

- It leads to many high-attaining students leaving their secondary schools at age 14 – a 'brain drain'. This has a negative impact the non-fee-paying States secondary schools:
- It reduces their curriculum offer, reducing learning opportunities for students.
- It impacts on the emotional wellbeing of the students who remain to do their GCSEs at Government non-fee-paying secondary schools who often feel stigmatised as "lower achievers" and distorts friendship groups.
- The variation in the number of students who transfer to Hautlieu each year has an impact on the level of funding that Government non-fee-paying secondary schools receive each year.

- 8.9. The Big Education Conversation asked how the current transfer arrangements at 14+ could be improved. The suggestions included:

- Remove the 14+ transfer to Hautlieu and make it a sixth from college only.
- Remove selection entirely and make Hautlieu non-selective, while also making available another sixth-form college (potentially as part of the new Les Quennevais School).

- Create a Grammar school system and make decisions about academic selection from 11+ in order to remove the effect on Government non-fee-paying secondary schools of the 14+ transfer.

8.10. What came through strongly in discussions was that, whatever educational route was made available for students, and regardless of whether they were ‘selected’ by ability or income, it should not be at expense of the quality their education or access to learning opportunities and successful educational outcomes.

8.11. For those who are new to Jersey, or just new to education, options for children and young people’s learning are not clear, from early years through to funding or further education. It was found that parents wanted greater access to advice and guidance in order to make informed decisions.

### What young people said

Young people want to ensure that all students can access a high-quality education regardless of their socio-economic status, background or circumstance. Students want to see a reduction in disparity and a “levelling-out” between different schools, including between States Schools, fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools, and between Hautlieu and Highlands College.

### What the community said

***“Jersey’s education system is far too selective. 40% of children attending fee paying education and then the additional selection into Hautlieu. This needs to change in order to have a more inclusive society”*** – member of the public, online comment

***“Outcomes should not be governed by the fact your parents can afford to send you to a fee-paying school. Subsidies for other fee-paying schools slowly removed. Selection for Hautlieu removed and sixth forms introduced in all States secondary schools”*** – member of the public, online comment

***“With the additional complication of a further choice at 14+, it may be that the Jersey education system does not act in the best interests of all and this may be one of the causes of the additional levels of stress now becoming apparent across the whole academic range. Any further fragmentation that may be under consideration is therefore seen by us to as undesirable. We feel there could and should be greater harmony between all secondary schools”*** – trustees of Beaulieu Convent School, written submission

***“One of our aspirations for the future would be for a fair and fully funded education system for all islanders. While our hope in the long term is for free Catholic education for all, we recognise that we have a responsibility now to help widen access ourselves, wherever possible. Notwithstanding, we feel that consideration could be given in any new proposals to re-structuring the funding arrangement of our schools, perhaps more along the lines adopted in the UK”*** – trustees of Beaulieu Convent School, written submission

***“We consider that Hautlieu is a key part of ensuring that there is a fair and accessible system of education in the Island. We also believe that the IB learner profile is a key component in the success of the School in assisting students to develop into citizens of the world.”***



***The 14+ system is fundamentally an issue of student and parental choice. If students and parents wish to transfer to Hautlieu at 14, as they have a long history of doing in good numbers, then the school serves a purpose for the community. Students wishing to join the school at 14, through discussions as part of the application process, speak passionately about wanting a school where they can learn at an accelerated pace in an environment where they feel comfortable to be who they are.***

***Having a non-fee-paying school which offers a traditionally academic curriculum (suited to the nature of the 14+ cohort), alongside innovative new offers such as Mandarin and the IB courses, is an important requirement of a system with such high numbers accessing a similar curriculum but in the fee-paying sector.***

***The fact that the Hautlieu sixth form is part of a school gives students a key experience of being able to study within a distinct community ethos that allows post-16 students to model responsible behaviours to younger students. While the sixth formers have additional levels of autonomy given to them many parents and students appreciate the safety net of the school environment. This is very different to the learning environments of many of the large tertiary and sixth form colleges that exist in the UK – many of these centres are only seen as a qualification centre and not a community” – Governing Body of Hautlieu, written submission***

***“Why on earth do we still have the 14+? It makes no sense at all. Get rid of 14+; amalgamate Highlands and Hautlieu, make them non-selective” – parent, online comment***

***“There’s a lack of diversity and a lack of choice. There should be a large sixth form college with options to mix A Levels and other qualifications” – parent, online comment***

***“I hope that A Level education will be provided as standard education in all public secondary schools and not just private schools. It is awful that children in public secondary schools have to move schools to complete A Levels – it just adds further opportunity for them to choose leaving education early” – parent, online comment***

## **9. Vocational education and training (VET), and adult learning**

9.1. Vocational education and training (VET) is an important part of Jersey’s education system. It focuses on providing students with the knowledge and skills they require to succeed in a range of careers across different industries. In turn, this supports local businesses to attract employees with the skills they need to prosper and supports Jersey’s economic growth and success.

9.2. The Big Education Conversation heard how vocational education and training offers important knowledge and skills that provide a route for students into further education and employment. However, many people we spoke with highlighted concern that academic study is held in higher regard than vocational education and training. It was noted that this is not a problem unique to Jersey, but the view that VET was a ‘second rate’ remained strong and affected students’ choices when moving from secondary school into tertiary education.

- 9.3. We heard from students and employers that although Highlands College offered high-quality vocational education and training options, they were 'stigmatised' and valued less than the academic options provided at Hautlieu. Although perceptions towards Highlands College were changing, it was felt that more could be done to promote the study options available at Highlands College.
- 9.4. Measures to establish greater equivalence between academic and vocational education and training was considered as essential for raising the status of it an educational option. It was, therefore, suggested that vocational education and training should be provided alongside academic education, providing a 'mix' of academic and technical skills. There was potential for this to be provided through greater collaboration and alignment between Hautlieu and Highlands College. This would provide students with greater variety and flexibility in their learning opportunities, which was tailored to their strengths, interests and aspirations.
- 9.5. Other measures to improve vocational education and training opportunities included:

#### **Potential measures to improve vocational education and training**

- The Government should work in partnership industries and businesses to identify what types of knowledge and skills Jersey's economy will need in the future; work together to decide how to meet those needs; and develop new and enhanced learning opportunities in those areas. It was noted that good work was already being undertaken by Skills Jersey but there were further opportunities to bring schools, students and employers together.
- Employers should also have opportunities to be involved in and contribute to the design and delivery of vocational education and training so that the study options are relevant and reflect the needs of businesses. There was a degree of support from businesses about the potential for industries to provide private investment in VET study options.
- In our discussions with employers and Highlands College, we heard that there is a need to ensure that students who undertake vocational education and training continue to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- There was also support for work-integrated learning as part of the vocational offer, giving people the opportunity and flexibility to earn while they are learning. This required appropriate models of delivery, including on- and off-job opportunities. Good-quality apprenticeships were also valued as a progression route into employment.
- The careers guidance and information to students should be improved, including better quality and coordination of information and delivery in schools, and strengthening the links and communication between employers and schools.
- Programmes should be developed to target participation and engagement in education amongst students who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET'). There is support for improving links between secondary schools, tertiary education providers, employers and voluntary and community organisations to re-engage these students.
- There is the potential to extend the statutory age of compulsory education from 16 to 18 years old to ensure that all young people stay on in education or training,



and they have the right skills to access employment and prosper. However, there is an acknowledgement that raising the leaving age, on its own, is not enough to avoid early school leaving and it needs to be accompanied with incentives for students to stay and to develop core skills and competencies that are relevant to their future working life.

- 9.6. Tertiary learning opportunities are especially important in the context of the work of the Migration Policy Development Board, which has identified the need for Jersey's workforce to have the right mix of skills, aligned with the current and future needs of business, government and society, to reduce the potential skills vacuum that draws migrations to the islands. Increasing the number of people who have the right skills and remain productively in the workforce for longer is a way to address this issue.
- 9.7. The [Post-16 Strategy for Jersey](#), which was published by the Minister for Education in October 2019, sets out a series of actions to ensure that Jersey has a high-quality tertiary education system that is relevant to the future demands of the island's economy and provides appropriate access to learning opportunities for everyone.
- 9.8. The Big Education Conversation also heard about the importance of seeing education not only as a *life stage* but a process that people needed to engage with throughout their lives. We heard that adults needed to be economically active for much longer than previous generations. Moreover, changes in the labour market meant that people needed to be able to continuously acquire or adapt new knowledge and skills to cope with changes they may experience during their working life, and to take advantage of the opportunities this could offer them.
- 9.9. We heard that these courses enabled adults to:
- upskill for their own personal development and access a particular career;
  - reskill for a career change;
  - re-enter or catch-up on learning at a later stage in life;
  - gain a qualification in order to access Higher Education; and
  - raise basic skills proficiency such as numeracy, literacy and digital skills to improve access to employment opportunities.
- 9.10. We also heard that there were a number of barriers and constraints that impede on people's ability to engage and participate in adult learning. These included:
- funding may not be available to help people with the costs of their education or training;
  - time commitments and insufficient flexibility in course time and structure;
  - other responsibilities that they must balance against the demands of learning – e.g. work commitments childcare arrangements; or caring for elderly family members;
  - transportation arrangements;
  - lack of awareness or information about opportunities to learn;
  - long-term ill-health; and
  - lack of confidence to participate in education
- 9.11. We heard it was important to understand what the barriers were for adult to participate in learning and to put in place approaches to remove these barriers. The suggestions we heard included:
- developing flexible and personalised learning pathways centred around the needs of the individual;

- offering flexible provision in terms of time and delivery method so that individuals are able to engage in a way that meets their personal needs, circumstances and preferences; and
- providing opportunities for people to gain a broad set of skills, knowledge and capabilities to be able to progress successfully into employment

9.12. The Big Education Conversation also explored the opportunities available for people to take up informal leisure- and recreational-based learning courses. We saw how these courses are provided through the Highlands Adult Community Education Programme, by the Parishes and voluntary and community organisations. They may include courses that are offered as a single event or over multiple sessions. The courses focus on activities such as art and design, cooking, digital and IT skills, languages and sports and fitness, which enable adults to gain new forms of knowledge and skills in a less formal structure and setting.

9.13. The Big Education Conversation visited the Philip Maurant Centre to speak with students and teachers involved in adult learning courses. Those we spoke with told us that adult learners were motivated to take courses for several reasons. The courses, firstly, provided the opportunity for people to pursue interests and build knowledge and skills such as painting and local history. Secondly, the view was expressed that, in a time of life when people's social networks may begin narrow as they get older and retire, courses helped people to '*get out of the house*' and stay mentally, physically and socially active. And even for younger participants they contributed to their wellbeing and confidence.

9.14. Concern was raised with the Big Education Conversation about the cost of adult learning courses and the impact that fee increases had had on the number of people taking courses. It was felt that, for some people, the cost of the courses had become a barrier to taking part – both formal and informal types of courses. While the difficulty of running courses was acknowledged, especially if there were too few students, it was stressed that the benefits of adult learning would be lost if a wide programme of courses could no longer be offered or if the cost became prohibitive for people.

### **What young people said**

Young people frequently requested more advice and support for transitioning into new areas of education or life, particularly regarding what future education and career pathways are available to them.

They would welcome the development of further partnerships between businesses and schools, and opportunities for work experience, so that they are aware of the full range of employment and career options in Jersey and can make decisions based on this information.

Young people seek more emphasis on life skills with many saying that students need to be better prepared for adult life and have knowledge about how to get a job and the skills that they will require which are relevant to those jobs.

Several students said there should be more support and encouragement for pathways other than university because they think that tertiary education is not suitable for everyone yet there was an expectation from both parents and schools that they would follow an academic pathway.

## Skills Jersey events

The Big Education Conversation held two events along with Skills Jersey (24 October 2019 and 8 January 2020) where local businesses and employers were invited to share their views on the education system, and how it can meet the needs of the island's economy. They represented a range of industries, including finance, construction, digital, tourism and retail.

Local businesses and employers told the Big Education Conversation:

- More needs to be done to support vocational training and access to apprenticeships. They expressed the view that vocational courses must be equal to academic subjects and enable students to mix between the two areas.
- They highlighted the need to undertake a proper assessment of the island's skills needs in order to inform education policy and the types and range of courses on offer in schools and colleges.
- There was a sense of disconnect between government, schools and business, which impacts on the learning opportunities available to students. Industry representatives felt that it was difficult to gain access to some schools to draw awareness of the career opportunities that are available to students on-island. They recognised the work of Skills Jersey in bridging this gap and building relationships between schools and businesses but wanted to encourage more partnership working in this area.
- There was a particular concern that teachers are not always aware of the opportunities that exist. There should be a joined-up and consistent approach between schools and businesses in order to provide students with information about the opportunities available to them.
- They highlighted that one of Jersey's strengths is the ability to harness community support, so there were good opportunities to strengthen partnership working between government, schools and industries. This would improve awareness, support innovation and create new learning opportunities for students.
- Some businesses felt that career planning for students should commence at an earlier stage in their education so that they had time to plan and make informed choices.
- There was support for establishing career paths that encompass all aspects of education – academic learning, skills development, support and mentoring, and on- and off-job learning so there is a package of opportunities for students.
- There was a view that more should be done to develop and promote on-island education and training, and industry should be involved in the design. Courses needed to be tailored to the island's skills requirements such as health and social care; tourism; construction and engineering etc. The courses should not focus solely on the finance industry but a diverse range of industries and careers available in Jersey.
- It was felt important to understand that learning is a life-long endeavour. They highlighted the importance of life-long education so that people continue to have

opportunities to learn and upskill throughout their working lives. The focus should be on equality of access across all age groups.

- Jersey's education system should focus on providing accessible learning opportunities for existing employers to learn new skills as the requirements of the workplace change. There should be a focus on helping people return to work such as parents who have taken career gaps to raise children, supporting adults to re-train and return to study. The times of courses needs to be aligned with adult working patterns and offer greater flexibility to learn over a longer period of time.
- There is a need to upskill existing employees with basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is considerable concern among industries that a lack of these skills among some of the workforce have become a significant barrier to employment.

## 10. Health and wellbeing

- 10.1. There is growing awareness about the importance of social, emotional, physical and mental health and wellbeing in students' education. This touches on every aspect of a student's life such as their personal development, resilience and participation in society. We heard that people want schools provide a "whole child" approach to education, with a balanced focus on cognitive, social and emotional skills throughout learning. They also want schools to work alongside parents and other professional services and agencies to provide an effective system of support, prevention and early intervention at all stages of the education system.
- 10.2. We were told by students that, if they had higher levels of wellbeing then they felt that they would have more confidence, better self-esteem, more satisfaction with their schools and life, and healthier relationships with others. This would serve them well in later life, as adults who are happy and enjoy healthy lifestyles.
- 10.3. There is, in particular, a recognition of increased anxiety and mental health issues amongst children and young people and teachers and staff. The suggested causes include:
- social media (and no ability to 'switch off' from peers and pressure);
  - increased academic demands in terms of curriculum and testing; and
  - parents and carers having less 'available time' for children, so time at home is spent on 'functional' activities – dinner, bed, homework etc.
- 10.4. For many, there is a desire for consideration of wellbeing to be integral to the structure of the whole school experience, not an 'add on' via PSHE classes, ensuring a 'rounded' model of education. This covers several 'layers' – firstly, support from teachers to understand and develop skills and strategies to manage the pressures and individual circumstances of their students, and to enable them to sign-post to other services; secondly, access to high-quality in-school support and counselling; and thirdly, timely and sufficient access to professional services that are provided by other organisations and agencies.
- 10.5. Teachers and head teachers agree that schools play an essential role in supporting students' health and wellbeing. Each school that the Big Education Conversation visited, for example, provides a pastoral system. In doing so, they recognised the connection between students' physical and mental health and wellbeing and their educational attainment.

- 10.6. Nevertheless, there was an equal view that schools do not have the capacity, funding or the expertise to deal effectively with all health and wellbeing issues that students are experiencing. They feel particularly strongly that government services and agencies are not meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable students effectively, which has led to students not receiving the type or level of support they require. This is detrimental to students and takes teachers away from their core purpose of teaching. These are complex problems that must be dealt with by professionals with the correct knowledge and expertise.
- 10.7. There were other areas where health and wellbeing are important, too. We heard about the importance of extra-curricular activities such as sport and ensuring they have access to good-quality, nutritious meals during their school day in order to support effective learning. We also heard that there should be an entitlement for students to learn how to cook, in order to give them skills in this area for their future life, as well as to encourage healthy eating and help tackle issues such as obesity. There was a view that there was value in voluntary and community organisations working with schools in this area to support learning outside of the core curriculum.

### **What young people said**

There was support for students' wellbeing, including their mental and physical health. This was seen as high priority for students and a key part of providing a "well-rounded" education.

Young people said that schools need to provide support for students' personal needs and their wellbeing to ensure their educational success.

While students see and welcome the various initiatives going on in schools in educating students about mental health, they would like more support and awareness of student wellbeing from their teachers, schools and the education system as a whole. They want this support to be genuine, reliable and easily accessible.

Young people feel that schools have a responsibility to support their wellbeing. A number of mechanisms were viewed as supporting wellbeing, including support and trusting relationships in schools with teachers; support services; support networks with peers; education around mental health and physical health; emotional resilience and self-care.

Young people recognise that teachers cannot provide all their support needs, but highlight the need for teachers to be supportive, understanding of their needs and situations, and to sign-post to other support when necessary. They want teachers to receive training in how to recognise when a student may be struggling and how to support them. There is also a wider network of support such as social workers, career guidance counsellors, psychologists that students say they should have timely access to.

Many young people made the point that workload and pressure to succeed academically is too great for some students; and this can have a highly negative impact on mental health and wellbeing. Equally, there needs to be recognition of how far some students have developed – yet the expectation that all students will receive a certain level of academic achievement is unrealistic and means students with valuable skills and knowledge are seen as "failures".

There was also concern that wider social issues were having an impact on their wellbeing – financial pressures; housing; challenging family relationships; pressures of parents' health (e.g. young carers).

Teaching students how to care for and maintain their wellbeing and health was considered an essential role of the education system. Encouraging and educating students how to be physically and mentally fit and resilient was considered a critical skill both for school and throughout life.

They also want to know where they can go for support and want to feel confident asking for help. There was concern that, even where support was offered, this was often in a stigmatised environment; overly visible to other students without ability for students to talk about concerns discretely; and it was often felt that the support provided would not be good enough.

Physical health was discussed. A number of young people drew a link between physical health and fitness with mental health.

### **What the community said**

***“There should be greater focus on health and wellbeing in the education system, including support and guidance on matters such as mental health”*** – parent, online comment

***“We believe that our concern for the wellbeing and growth of each child in a seamless continuity of support, encouragement and development from 3 to 19 years can be a model for the future of education in Jersey”*** – trustees of Beaulieu Convent School, written submission

## **11. The changing nature of families**

11.1. Many of the contributions to the Big Education Conversation, including from parents and teachers, raised concern about the changing nature of families and how this is reflected in the provision of education. The view was widely expressed that being a parent today is tough. Parents are working long hours and may have multiple jobs; they may be experiencing financial stress and insecurity; inadequate housing; unemployment; mental and physical ill-health; as well as personal barriers such as a lack of self-esteem and low educational achievement. These issues put families under stress and may, in turn, impact on a child's educational outcomes.

11.2. The Big Education Conversation spoke with teachers at length about how problems that had developed in a child's home environment were frequently manifesting themselves in schools. We heard deep concerns and frustration from teachers about students who were tired in class; were not receiving appropriate nutrition; had poor hygiene; displayed poor behaviour in class; and had significant gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills.

11.3. When these difficulties are expressed during the school day, they become the teacher's responsibility. Teachers cannot be faulted for their efforts; they are at the coalface of many social issues and witness many distressing family situations. We heard emotional stories of teachers supporting parents with Income Support claims; providing food



vouchers for parents' shopping; and buying furniture because of poor quality housing conditions such as damp and mould.

- 11.4. Teachers have a passion to teach and nurture children, but they cannot 'fix' social problems. While there was recognition that schools have a crucial role to play in children's personal development, teachers felt that there was increasingly a blurring of lines of what they were being expected to respond to and the issues that were expected to tackle. This is difficult for teachers, disruptive for other children and has an impact on the children affected. These are complex problems that need to be addressed by those with the correct knowledge and expertise – health professionals, nutritionists, parents and other services.
- 11.5. As the Big Education Conversation has shown, schools do not exist in isolation. They are valued in their communities and we have seen a range of positive examples of engagement and cooperation with parents around their children's education. However, being part of the community also means being clear about the role and responsibilities that schools hold and what issues can only be tackled beyond the school with the support of parents, carers and families, and professional expertise.

#### **What young people said**

Young people said they would like schools to encourage parents and families to get involved in schools and their children's education, building strong relationships that ensure students receive the support they need. They acknowledge the value of strong parental and family support for their education. They want strong connections between their parents, families and teachers so that they receive the support they need both at home and in school.

#### **What the community said**

***“The issues that tend to get raised are actually issues of society; inequality, poverty, poor parenting, abuse in all of its forms, particularly unconscious neglect. Where school performance is deemed an issue, the underlying cause requires political and socio-economic resolution from grass roots, and not a sticky plaster approach in schools”*** – teacher, online comment

## **12. The role of schools and the wider community**

- 12.1. The Big Education Conversation heard that people want Jersey's education system to make the most of the expertise that exists in the wider community through effective partnership working that can improve the curriculum, teaching and learning and contribute towards successful outcomes for students in their education.
- 12.2. The role of schools themselves go beyond the delivery of the curriculum. We saw examples of schools and teachers using their position in the community to provide range of support services – e.g. childcare; after-school provision; breakfast clubs; homework clubs; sport clubs; music and other extra-curricular activities; parental support services; adult learning opportunities.
- 12.3. However, examples of these arrangements are often fragmented and informal, based on personal relationships, goodwill and a school's capacity to access or provide these activities. The Big Education Conversation believes there is a significant potential to strengthen and harness networks across a range of stakeholders in Jersey's education



system, and to adopt a consistent and coordinated approach towards collaborative practices.

- 12.4. Youth services are also an important element of the support wanted and needed by young people. They provide valuable ‘soft education’ provision. Youth work can provide young people life skills and youth workers can engage with young people in a way that schools and other services cannot. We heard how youth services help with young people’s social, emotional and personal development, helping them to understand and navigate the world around them with qualified youth workers as they go through adolescence – a time of life that involves significant changes, decisions and choices for young people.
- 12.5. We heard how youth services enable young people to develop their confidence and skills – life skills (family and relationships; physical and mental health and wellbeing); economic and personal skills (financial literacy; understanding and navigating risks such as drugs and alcohol); learning about their own strengths and needs; engaging positively in wider community networks; and developing a voice so that they can participate in the community and influence decisions that affect them.
- 12.6. The delivery of education should be in conjunction with other educational and social sector agencies. They have positive relationships with schools and can have a positive impact on young people’s learning outcomes. They provide a variety of additional ‘added-value’ learning experiences and services that schools cannot provide with their own funding or expertise. Examples include Every Child Our Future, Jersey Heritage, Caring Cooks and the Prince’s Trust.
- 12.7. However, opportunities are inconsistent between schools and relationships are often informal based on networks developed by individual schools. There was a desire among some senior leads for a more formalised and strategic approach to this, ensuring the ‘wrap around’ activities complement learning and development within school hours.

#### **What young people said**

Young people said they believe it is important for the wider community to be involved in their education. They want a range of individuals and groups to contribute towards their education.

The Jersey Youth Service is recognised, especially. They value the personal support that youth workers provide and being able to engage in positive activities that develop soft knowledge and skills. They say that this is complementary to formal education.

This is a two-way process – young people want to be active citizens and contribute positively to society, at school and after they have left school. They think schools should foster connections with the community.

#### **What the community said**

***“My daughter loves staying after-school for homework club; she doesn’t need to, but she wants to be part of it”*** – primary school parent, January 2020

***“Sport, sport and more sport. It created healthy fit children that feel they belong”*** – parent, online comment

***“I hope education will find a balance between outside, sport, wellbeing, technology, functional skills, skills for life – as well as the reading, maths and other educational topics”*** – parent, online comment

***“Children need to enjoy childhood, and this shouldn’t stop at school”*** – primary school teacher, February 2020

***“Children’s home lives are not always going to be conducive for them to do homework or other sports activities...so we offer a homework club; this provides a much quieter and more engaging environment, with support, where they can do things like homework and sports”*** – secondary school head teacher, January 2020

***“I think we should change school hours to meet the needs of working parents. Could homework and physical education be outside 8:45 to 3pm? Focus during this time purely on curriculum subjects. A number of schools already offer breakfast and after school clubs. Could these be more formalised. School year versus long summer break could this be evened out?”*** – member of the public, online comment

***“Nurseries, breakfast club and afterschool clubs at every primary”*** – parent, online comment

***“More uniformity across the primary schools with everyone having a nursery a breakfast club and after school clubs to support working parents. Longer school day so that co-curricular opportunity is taken up by all not just those who can afford it”*** – parent, online comment

***“More outdoor and active fun engaging activities...let's get out kids inspired by nature and give them some adrenaline rushes! Build foundations for coping for life”*** – parent, online comment

### 13. Collaboration and joint-working

13.1. As a small island, Jersey is well-placed to develop collaboration and joint-working between different schools, colleges and groups of teachers. This would include, for example, sharing knowledge and resources. However, in discussion with teachers and head teachers, the Big Education Conversation observed that the current approach is inconsistent based on informal arrangements that have developed between individual schools and staff. There were limited examples at a system-wide level to share best practice, staffing resources and the curriculum offered to students.

13.2. While there is recognition of the value of collaboration and joint-working between schools, the main deterrents for this happening, in the view of the teachers and head teachers we spoke with, are the self-contained nature of many schools in Jersey; the time and resources needed for collaboration and joint-working to operate successfully; the level of competition between schools; and a view that, while the principle of sharing knowledge and expertise is beneficial, examples where it had been trialled before often lacked structure, momentum and value for those involved.

13.3. However, the Big Education Conversation did hear enthusiasm among teachers and head teachers for developing a more consistent approach towards collaboration and joint working between schools. They agreed that such networks had the potential – if

appropriate funding was made available – to enhance the learning opportunities available to students, spread best practice, and ensure the efficient use of resources.

#### **What the community said**

***“I would like to see secondary schools working together with centralised HR and admin area that works with all schools and that actually understand how education work”*** – teacher, online comment

***“There are a range of subjects and lessons taught across different secondary schools that all pupils should be able to access...I know there are logistical issues to overcome but we could really open up new learning opportunities”*** – teacher, online comment

***“Some of the primary schools are already working together like this. But it has to be worthwhile and lead to improvements rather than just another talking shop”*** – primary school teacher, December 2019

### **14. The voice of children and young people**

14.1. Throughout the course of the Big Education Conversation, we spoke with diverse groups of children and young people in a variety of settings. We heard that, regardless of their age, background or circumstances, children and young people want to have a say on, and the opportunity to influence, things that affect their lives and communities. The Big Education Conversation agrees.

14.2. Children and young people have important and valuable contributions to make on a range of issues, from the running of their schools; through to youth issues; and wider challenges facing society. There are a series of benefits to this. Firstly, children and young people have a range of experiences, thoughts and ideas that can enrich decision-making processes. Secondly, engagement with children and young people has long-term benefits. It helps them to develop vital communication skills and supports them to develop into well-rounded and confident individuals.

14.3. The Big Education Conversation witnessed for itself how children and young people have a rich, valuable and important contribution to make. They are articulate and knowledgeable individuals who want opportunities to get involved and participate in decisions.

14.4. However, this was not the case for all the children and young people we met, and there is a need to recognise that their ability or willingness to participate is complex – affected by things such as a lack of confidence and prior exposure to the skills required for engagement; family background and a mistrust of government insofar as they do not believe they can influence or change things.

14.5. It is important, therefore, that communication and engagement with children and young people should be offered through a range of channels and formats. ‘Youth’ is not a uniform category and includes an array of individuals with different backgrounds, expectations and needs. To this end, any engagement activities must take this into account and ensure that a range of voices are being heard.

14.6. Schools are good settings for fostering children and young people’s voices, equipping them with the skills that are needed to get involved and participate in decisions. However, in speaking with students, we heard they are worried about there being too

few opportunities for them within school to offer their views and input into decisions that affect them and their peers. It was felt, for example, that schools were unwilling or reluctant to share some of their decision-making responsibilities with students. Some of these issues, such as the running of schools, had a direct impact on students' experiences of the school environment (e.g. uniforms; behavioural issues; and extra-curricular activities), but which students have little say over.

14.7. It was acknowledged that there were genuine and practical reasons as to why many of the views and ideas offered by students could not be enacted. Even so, the view was expressed that there were too few mechanisms for students to receive feedback so that they could see that their views were being taken seriously and acted on and, if not, to understand why those decisions had been made. The School Council Network was noted as a recent initiative that supported students to have a say about issues that affect their schools and the wider community.

### What young people said

Young people said that it was important to be given the opportunity to comment on their school, and education, and to have their opinions validated or explained why certain decisions are made the way they are.

They also want opportunities to have a say on issues that affect them and the wider community, including social issues, the environment and the education system, which will have an impact on them and future generations.

Some of the issues where young people said they want to have their views heard included:

- **The school day:** school timetabling and start and finishing times was mentioned by a large number of students.
  - Primary school students generally want longer lunches and breaks to play with friends.
  - Secondary school students suggested that the number of lessons per day and the length of classes made it difficult to engage and learn.
  - There was support among secondary school students for starting and finishing school later. They referred to scientific research, which they said showed that teenagers need more sleep to perform better at school. However, many acknowledged the challenges involved in changing school times for both parents and teachers.
- **Providing free healthy lunches** (or less expensive options) and transport to and from school were suggested by a sizeable number of young people.
- There are mixed views on **school uniforms**. Some students do not like school uniforms but recognise their importance so that students are not seen as *'different'* or not able to afford *'decent clothes'*. However, they think uniforms should be more practical (such as removing ties) and there should be fewer rules around school dress and attire, which they say can be *'petty'* and *'humiliating'*.
- Many students mentioned **behaviour and discipline** at school. Most were in favour of there being consequences for poor behaviour. It was consistently heard that students think their learning is negatively impacted by the misbehaviour of

others. However, there is a view that some forms of discipline, or responses such as exclusion, can be excessive and harmful to students' learning. They also feel that discipline should be exercised fairly and consistently.

- There was a view, for example, that teachers sometimes '*picked*' on students and singled them out and treated them unfairly compared to others. They wanted teachers to try and understand the reason behind the behaviour before disciplining the student.
- **Bullying** was mentioned by a number of young people. There was support for schools taking a robust approach towards tackling bullying and teaching students how to respect each other and respond to bullying. We heard that several schools were developing strategies to draw awareness to bullying and tackling the issue.

## 15. Conclusion

15.1. The findings of the Big Education Conversation provide an insight into Jersey's education system, informing us about its strengths, the challenges it is facing, and outcomes that the community wants to see for children and young people. There were strongly held views among all those we spoke with about the future of education. However, a consistent view among those we spoke with is that Jersey's education system must provide accessible, quality and equitable learning opportunities for all students.

15.2. In support of this aim, there were several key themes emerging from the conversations we had:

- There is an immediate need to provide adequate funding and resources for education targeted at areas of greatest need such as Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. In the longer-term, funding levels will need to reflect the resources required to deliver the policy ambitions emerging from the Big Education Conversation.
- There is immense support for teachers and the fundamental role they play in children and young people's learning and attainment. Future policy development must focus on improving in-classroom support for teachers; increasing their access to professional development opportunities; and introducing measures to uphold a high-quality teaching profession and the value that it is attached to the role in the wider community.
- Students must have access to high-quality, relevant and tailored learning opportunities with clear routes of progression (both academic and vocational) through the education system.
- There is an opportunity to consider giving schools and colleges greater autonomy to make decisions about their own operations and the education they provide. However, this must be supported by appropriate governance and accountability arrangements.
- Education involves a range of actors, including parents and other agencies, who actively participate in and support students' education. Future policy development should focus on the role they play and where they can add further value to the education system.

15.3. The findings of the Big Education Conversation, alongside the work of the Early Years Policy Development Board, the Post-16 Strategy and the Independent School Funding Review, provide the basis for a broad policy agenda across Jersey's education system, which will support decisions about the priorities for education and areas where we will need to focus resources in the years ahead.

## Appendix 1 – list of engagement events

The Big Education Conversation engaged with as many people and organisations as possible to hear their views about education in Jersey. Between October 2019 and February 2020, we met with:

- children and young people
- youth centres
- adult learners
- parents, carers and families
- teachers and support staff
- head teachers
- school and college governing bodies
- teachers' unions
- businesses and business representative groups
- voluntary and community organisations

A number of different formats were used, including one-to-one meetings and drop-in sessions. We also attended events such as the Jersey Skills Show and Highlands College open evening.

### Events

- Stand at the 2019 Jersey Skills Show, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019
- Stand at Customer and Local Services
- Les Quennevais Sports Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019
- Jersey Library, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- Highlands College, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- Skills Jersey employers and industry discussion, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019
- Skills Jersey employers and industry discussion, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020

### Primary and secondary schools and colleges

The Big Education Conversation visited the following primary and secondary schools and colleges, including Government fee-paying and non-fee-paying schools and colleges.

Beaulieu Convent School	St. George's
Bel Royal Primary School	St. John's Primary School
D'Auvergne Primary School	St. Luke's Primary School
De La Salle College	Les Landes Primary School
Haute Vallée	Les Quennevais
Hautlieu	Plat Douet Primary School
Highlands College	Rouge Bouillon Primary School
Janvrin Primary School	St. Martin's Primary School
Jersey College for Girls	St. Mary's Primary School
Jersey Music Service	St. Peter's Primary School
Le Rocquier	St. Saviour's Primary School
Samarès Primary School	Trinity Primary School
Springfield Primary School	Victoria College Preparatory
St. George's	Student Council Network

Engagement methods included:

- meetings with school governors



- meetings with head teachers and leadership teams
- meetings with teachers and school staff
- drop-in sessions with students
- meetings with student councils
- meetings with parent associations
- drop-in sessions with parents

### **Youth Clubs and Projects:**

The Big Education Conversation visited youth clubs and projects to meet with children and young people across different school year groups, including groups for individuals with additional needs and support requirements.

Grands Vaux Youth Centre
La Pouquelaye Youth and Community Centre
Le Squez Youth Club
LGBT Youth Club
Maufant Youth Project
Move On Café
St. Brelade's Youth Club
St. John's Youth Club
St. Lawrence Youth Club
St. Mary's Youth Club
Young Carers Group (My Time for Young Carers)
Youth Inclusion Project

### **Voluntary and community sector:**

The Big Education Conversation met with the boards, staff members and/or service users of the following voluntary and community sector organisations:

Autism Jersey
Barnardo's Jersey – meeting with service users
Brighter Futures – meeting with service users
Caring Cooks
Every Child Our Future
Jersey Childcare Trust
Jersey Heritage
Liberate Jersey
L'Office du Jèrriais
Mind Jersey
Parent Carer Forum Family Event
St. Helier Methodist Church – meeting with service users
The Shelter Trust – meeting with Strathmore 16-25 residents

### **Business groups**

The Big Education Conversation met with representatives of the following business groups alongside standalone drop-in events for businesses.

Digital Jersey
Jersey Construction Council
Jersey Finance Education Working Group

## Public bodies

The Big Education Conversation met with representatives of the following public bodies:

<i>Educational Psychology Service</i> , Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills
Inclusion and Early Intervention Service, Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills
Office of the Children's Commissioner

