

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

Question:

In the November 20th edition of the Bailiwick Express, it was reported that Neave Chatting-Tonks, Chair of the Guernsey Youth Forum, spoke at the UK House of Commons on Friday November 17th and in her speech she focused on the fact that bullying in our schools here in the island has increased. She referred to the fact that according to data collated through surveys carried out in 2019 and 2022, one in three secondary aged children, reported they had been bullied at, or near school, in the past 12 months. In addition to that, the November 30th edition of the Bailiwick Express asked the question 'Why is it that there is a growing feeling that issues facing some of our schools, and the disproportionate impact some dysregulated students have on an education setting, have worsened?' In response to that, Liz Coffey, the Executive Principal of the Secondary School Partnership, revealed that police have attended Les Varendes school 4 times this academic year, twice for the same student. She also stated that there is a particular focus on student behaviour at this current time.

The National Education Union (the NEU), stated the following in the very same article 'We believe that the island is letting down our young people. We need better pathways and quicker access to support for some of our most vulnerable students. The States of Guernsey, needs to act now to ensure that schools are as inclusive as possible, but also that, whenever necessary, students can be removed to other settings so they are then able to receive the support they need'. Mrs Coffey added 'We have to have a really intelligent grown up conversation about this, where we all take on the responsibilities of what we can do to make the provision better for all of our young people'.

So with all of that in mind, are you able please to provide me with a detailed response regarding your committees approach to the concerns highlighted above, and also, what are you and your committee currently doing to address the issue of bullying in our schools?

Reply:

Whilst behaviour and bullying in some circumstances are connected, poor or dysregulated behaviour is not the same as, nor does it necessarily result in, bullying. We have therefore considered behaviour and bullying separately in this response.

Behaviour

For learners to be successful, schools need to be calm, positive and purposeful places. Scrutinising standards of behaviour is therefore something taken extremely seriously by all schools and settings. As such, rigorous monitoring of standards of behaviour in our schools is central to: each schools' self-evaluation; scrutiny by their respective Interim Governance Boards; the Education Office's internal audit function; and external inspection, which currently takes place via Ofsted.

Ofsted inspections tell us that in almost all schools and settings inspected to date, behaviour is judged to be 'good'. The two schools where this was not the case have both subsequently had follow-up Ofsted monitoring visits to check that they are making rapid progress in addressing identified areas of weakness. During these monitoring inspection visits, Ofsted reported that both schools had made effective progress in addressing behaviour. Both schools will face a further full graded reinspection later this year.

We are confident that this will give the community reassurance that behaviour at these two schools has significantly improved. Survey data corroborates this and shows that in these two schools, lesson disruption is very rare. This is further reinforced through school visits by Education Development Officers.

Surveys of staff form an important part of the internal audit function of the Education Office. In October 2023, schools were required to gather staff perceptions of behaviour using a survey tool from TeacherTapp – a UK based organisation that is a market leader in school survey tools. These surveys provide a benchmark against which standards of behaviour can be evaluated objectively and comparisons made with similar schools across both the Bailiwick and the UK. The results of the survey were presented to, and discussed in detail by, the Committee on 7th December 2023. In our roles as Interim Governors, Committee members also take the opportunity to discuss the results of such surveys, and the actions that will be taken to address any issues they identify, with Headteachers. The data for almost all schools when considered individually, and for States' schools when data is averaged by primary or secondary phase, is very positive. Survey data corroborates the view of school leaders, officers and external inspectors that behaviour in primary schools is an area of significant strength across the Bailiwick.

Our States-maintained Primary schools were rated in the survey as scoring well above average (when compared with similar schools elsewhere) in the following areas: low levels of lesson disruption; behaviour in corridors; low levels of physical aggression; levels of staff supervision and levels of staff contentment at work.

In our States-maintained secondary schools, the picture was more mixed but still above average (when compared with similar schools elsewhere) in the following areas: low levels of lesson disruption; behaviour in corridors; low levels of physical aggression; levels of staff supervision and levels of staff contentment at work. However, the average obscures wide variations between secondary schools.

Addressing behaviour concerns is a top priority for school leadership teams where the survey feedback identified any issues and, in these cases, schools are working relentlessly to improve, in partnership with colleagues from across the Secondary School Partnership and Education Services. The Education Office is also providing substantial extra support for schools where areas for development have been identified. For example, by providing for additional senior staff and officer support to further strengthen behavioural and pastoral systems.

At the start of the current academic year (September 2023), the Secondary School Partnership (comprising Guernsey's four High Schools and the Sixth Form Centre) set up an alternative provision. This offers a more flexible education provision for students in years 10

and 11 from across the Secondary School Partnership schools. The provision supports students who were previously finding accessing education challenging due to a number of factors, some of which were behaviour related.

Headteachers/Principals in all States' schools and settings are obliged to report on behaviour at every Interim Governance Board meeting. This includes looking at learner exclusion data as well as external evidence/validation such as the results of TeacherTapp surveys referred to above. In almost all of our schools and settings, behaviour is self-evaluated as at least 'good' (using the criteria assigned to that evaluation in the [School Inspection Handbook](#)). The content of Inspection reports and stakeholder surveys confirm that these are accurate evaluations.

However, despite this positive picture, it is also true there are a small number of children within our schools whose dysregulated behaviour can present challenges for staff and sometimes for their peers. The new Secondary School Partnership goes some way to strengthening provision for students who struggle with dysregulation through the Alternative Provision described above and also via internal interventions. In addition, Les Voies School continues to provide an education for children with the most significant social, emotional and mental health needs, and alongside this offers an outreach service via which support is provided to students in other schools when needed. To support all our staff, from September 2024, a two-year programme of training for all teachers will be in place to assist them to meet the learning needs of all children – including those who experience barriers to learning due to their social, emotional and mental health needs.

However, we should recognise that challenging behaviour is in many cases a symptom of multi-faceted cultural, societal and family-related issues. As such it requires a multi-agency response with support partner agencies and support from - and for – parents/carers. Poverty, parental substance abuse, domestic violence and poor parental mental health, particularly when existing in combination, are all factors that contribute to putting children at risk of developing challenging behaviour as a symptom of underlying distress and/or trauma. Schools can respond to the symptoms, but addressing root causes can be difficult without support from agencies and parents/carers.

There are also contemporary factors that further exacerbate the challenges schools face. Societal issues such as allowing children inappropriate access to social media, access to vapes, or access to alcohol or drugs cannot be solved by schools alone. Vaping alone creates a number of challenges for Secondary schools and is a root cause of problematic behaviour in some of our schools. The corrosive effects of allowing children inappropriate access to social media is also well attested as a major contributor to poor mental health, as it is deliberately addictive and therefore presents parents with difficulties in setting appropriate boundaries with regards to its use. Schools are often the environment where these issues present as challenges, but it cannot be the job of government alone to deal with all of these problems without the support of families and the wider community.

Early intervention from a very young age, even before birth, by supporting parents to parent well, is well recognised to be a cost-effective strategy in reducing the likelihood of children in challenging family circumstances developing unhelpful coping mechanisms such as anti-social behaviour. As a Committee, we are working actively with other committees through

the work of the Children and Young People's Plan and also via projects which seek to investigate how the needs of our most vulnerable children and families can be met through a multi-agency approach.

Bullying

Our Anti-Bullying Procedures for schools describe bullying as: *any behaviour that is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person or group of people. It is usually unprovoked, persistent and can continue for a long period of time. It always reflects an abuse of power.*

In our schools, when helping students to understand what constitutes bullying we often use the acronym 'STOP': Several Times On Purpose.

The [2022 Guernsey Young People's Survey](#) raised some concerns about bullying in our schools. These are being addressed in a number of ways, including participation in the [Heroic Imagination Project](#) and UNICEF's [Rights Respecting Schools Award](#) (RSSA) in addition to actions put forward by the Youth Forum.

The Heroic Imagination Project (HIP), in partnership with the Education Psychology Service, was introduced across the Bailiwick in June 2022 via a multi-service, multi-agency conference. HIP's principles and practice were introduced to several schools and there was engagement with the Youth Forum. Since the launch, follow-up training and information sessions have been held for staff, students and parents. HIP clubs were established for students within certain schools and existing 'anti-bullying' groups were given further guidance, as were the members of the newly elected Youth Forum. HIP continues to be promoted via regular parent-professional information and discussion sessions and our school-based Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) are scheduled to receive HIP training as a means of further enhancing their practice.

The Rights Respecting Schools Award puts children's rights at the heart of schools. All States schools in Guernsey and Alderney have achieved at least the Bronze Rights Respecting School Award. Supporting all of our schools to achieve a silver Rights Respecting Schools Award is one of the many workstreams of our Education Strategy, as part of the Equity, Safety and Inclusivity priority. Our journey towards that goal is well underway and ensures that the rights of children and young people are both respected and well understood across the whole school community.

The Youth Forum's own survey in 2023 showed that levels of young people affected by bullying were considerably lower than reported in the Guernsey Young People's survey in 2022 (9% vs 33%, respectively).

Ofsted's inspections overwhelmingly report that bullying in our schools and settings is rare and, where it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Ofsted inspections include parent and student surveys as well as talking to students about bullying in the course of the inspection. Ofsted's comments in this regard are replicated below for ease of reference:

School or setting	Text from Ofsted report or monitoring visit
Vale Primary School	Pupils say that bullying does not happen. They say they feel safe. (Inspection Report)
St Martin's Primary School	Bullying is rare. When it does occur, pupils know that adults will deal with it quickly and effectively. (Inspection Report)
Les Voies School	Bullying is not prevalent. (Inspection Report)
Notre Dame du Rosaire Primary School	Issues rarely progress as far as bullying. If this does happen, it is taken seriously. (Inspection Report)
La Mare de Carteret High School	Bullying is rare. Pupils have confidence in staff to resolve any incidents swiftly and effectively. (Inspection Report)
St Sampson's High School	There has been considerable work completed to ensure that pupils understand what constitutes bullying and to extend the ways in which they can report concerns. This is making a positive difference to the frequency and the nature of such incidents. (Monitoring Visit)
St Anne's School	Many pupils state that bullying is not an issue at the school and that if there were a problem, staff would usually resolve it quickly. (Inspection Report)
La Houquette Primary School La Mare de Carteret Primary School The Guernsey Institute: College of Further Education Forest Primary School	Bullying not mentioned in inspection report.

In July 2023, in its follow-up monitoring report, Ofsted commented very positively on the considerable work done by St Sampson's High School, in response to a full inspection in June 2022 where bullying was highlighted as a significant cause of concern for the school. The Ofsted monitoring report noted a positive difference, with students taking great pride in being 'anti-bullying ambassadors.'

However, parent surveys of schools indicate that parental satisfaction with how schools deal with bullying is not yet good enough. The Education Office continues to work with schools and settings to monitor incidents of bullying to allow us to continue to assess the effectiveness of the strategies in place, as described above.

Our Post-16 students report low incidents of bullying, with strategies such as the student consultation of The Guernsey Institute's values supporting students to embed values such as

'respect' into their daily lives. Ofsted has commented on the positive difference made through the considerable work in this area.

Date of receipt of the Question: 4th March 2024

Date of Reply: 8th March 2024