

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

The following extracts are taken from the 'What does the school need to do to improve?' section of a number of Ofsted inspection reports on Guernsey schools in relation to the local curriculum and how it is applied:

*Vale*

*Teachers' subject knowledge is not secure in some areas of the curriculum. This makes it difficult for teachers to fully implement the intended curriculum. In some subjects, they do not accurately assess and rectify pupils' misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to continue to monitor the implementation of the curriculum to refine and further support teachers to develop their subject knowledge.*

*LMDC primary*

*Subject leadership is not fully developed. As a result, in some subjects, leaders do not have a secure enough understanding of how well pupils learn the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the expertise needed to check that pupils learn the curriculum successfully in all subjects.*

*Notre Dame*

*There are inconsistencies in how well some aspects of the curriculum are taught and assessed. In addition, teachers do not routinely expect pupils to produce work that is of a high standard. This is because leaders have not assured themselves that all of their expectations of teachers are carried out. Leaders need to make sure that what they expect is happening is evident in practice.*

*St Martin's*

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

*Forest*

*In some subjects, the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember is not clearly identified. As a result, pupils do not build up their subject knowledge securely or confidently draw from what they have learned about before. The school should ensure that the crucial ideas and concepts that are important for pupils to remember are outlined in all subjects.*

#### *Houquette*

*In some subjects, teachers are not always explicit about the knowledge they want pupils to remember. As a result, pupils cannot recall key learning well enough. Leaders need to ensure that teachers are clear about the subject-specific content they want pupils to know and the order in which this is best taught.*

*Teachers' use of assessment is not always precise enough to check what pupils know and understand. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils have gaps in their knowledge of the curriculum. Teachers need to assure themselves that all pupils secure all the essential knowledge that leaders intend.*

#### *St Anne's*

*Pupils do not study a well-structured curriculum in some subjects. This means that pupils are not supported to build on what they already know and prepare for what comes next. The school needs to ensure that planned improvements are implemented speedily, so that all pupils learn successfully.*

*The school does not use assessment effectively to check what pupils know and do not know across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils sometimes struggle with their learning as teaching and curriculum planning is not adapted to help them. The school must ensure that teachers use the information they have about pupils' prior knowledge to support them to learn more effectively.*

#### *LMDC High*

*Expectations of what pupils can achieve through the curriculum are not consistently high enough. Consequently, pupils' understanding is not deepened over time. Furthermore, some pupils do not take pride in the quality of their work. Leaders should raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve.*

#### *St Sampson's High*

*Leaders have not ensured that staff share a common understanding of the design, implementation and assessment of the curriculum. Curriculum development work has not been coordinated effectively, leading to a slow rate of improvement. Leaders need to ensure that all staff, particularly subject leaders, quickly develop effective curriculum plans in their subject areas.*

1. Does the Committee agree that the consistency of Ofsted's findings in relation to curriculum suggest that either the Big Picture Curriculum, or the way it is being interpreted in schools (or both) need to be revisited? If "yes" then does the Committee accept that they have a clear duty to lead that process? And if "no", how does the Committee explain the consistent findings of inadequacy in relation to the local curriculum?

**Response:**

No, the Committee does not agree with either premise and notes with a degree of disappointment that the above extracts from Ofsted's inspection reports for our schools have been taken out of context.

For transparency and context, the full reports resulting from Ofsted's inspections of 11 of our schools over the last two years and the two monitoring visits that have taken place following inspection judgements which highlighted areas where rapid improvement was essential can be found at [www.gov.gg/inspections](http://www.gov.gg/inspections).

It is important that each short report is considered in the round rather than being selective in the information used to interpret Ofsted's findings, and the Committee welcomes the opportunity to provide detailed information to explain the inspection framework for our States maintained settings.

Ofsted uses a four-point scale for all evaluations: grade 1: excellent (in England this grade is 'outstanding'); grade 2: good; grade 3: requires improvement; and grade 4: inadequate. Due to this it is inaccurate and unhelpful to state that there have been "*consistent findings of inadequacy in relation to the local curriculum*" following Ofsted inspections, because 'inadequacy' has a very specific meaning in this context.

The reports referred to above show that **the 'Quality of Education'** (which arises from the curriculum delivered) **in the majority of our schools/settings that have been inspected, has been objectively judged by Ofsted as 'good'**.

To receive a 'good' evaluation, the 'intent', 'implementation' and 'impact' of a school's curriculum is evaluated against 20 descriptors. These can be found on pages 62-64 of the [School Inspection Handbook](#) and for Further Education there are 14 descriptors - see pages 27 to 28 of the [Further Education and Skills Handbook](#).

When undergoing a period of curriculum development as described in these responses, the 'impact' of the change will take time to be evidenced, following the 'intent' being clearly articulated and understood and the 'implementation' phase being well advanced.

In summary, the ‘quality of education’ judgement states how well a school or setting provides an ambitious, effective and inclusive learning experience across the entire breadth of the 15 or more subjects that make up the curriculum.

Ensuring all learners read well and have strong numeracy skills is rightly central to the judgement. However, HM Inspectors also examine the effectiveness of learning in other curriculum areas, including how well learners remember what they have previously been taught, how well assessment is used to adapt teaching to learner need and the extent to which learners with special educational needs are well catered for.

**To receive a ‘good’ rating, schools must perform well across almost all of the descriptors referred to above** and have only minor weaknesses in others which the school can evidence it is making rapid progress to address. As such, receiving a ‘good’ rating is a significant achievement that the Committee believes should be celebrated.

It is the minor weaknesses that Ofsted typically highlights as areas for improvement. This is why the excerpts from Ofsted reports included in the introduction to these questions repeatedly say ‘in **some** subjects’. These will typically be subjects the school with support and challenge from the Education Office, via an honest self-evaluation process, has already identified for further improvement, and has demonstrated its understanding of the need to improve those areas to HM Inspectors, as well as demonstrating that it is already working hard to make those improvements. These same areas will be the focus of appropriate support and challenge from the school’s Interim Governors, who will also be expecting to see - and monitoring - rapid progress.

Where schools meet all the descriptors of a high quality of education securely and consistently, then the school’s ‘quality of education’ is likely to be judged as ‘excellent’. By contrast, a ‘good’ judgement means almost all the descriptors are being met securely and consistently, but in some subjects there might be areas where this is less consistent or less secure. When schools are judged to be ‘good’, and often even when schools are judged to be ‘excellent’ (‘outstanding’ in England) Ofsted’s inspection reports will also highlight areas where things could be even better.

The question asks whether *“the Big Picture Curriculum, or the way it is being interpreted in schools (or both) need to be revisited”*.

There are two aspects to our approach to curriculum development and guidance for schools and teachers. The overarching framework of the Bailiwick Curriculum sets out: what we are trying to achieve; the values we espouse; how we organise learning; and how we evaluate the extent to which our curriculum is achieving its overall aims.

The skills in our curriculum are developed through the delivery of the essential knowledge that all children and young people are expected to acquire at each Key Stage. This knowledge is set out in our subject-specific entitlement documents (see below for more information). Schools and teachers are trained and empowered to use the guidance provided by the curriculum framework and the entitlement documents to develop and deliver appropriate learning and experiences, adapting their teaching to best meet the specific needs of the learners in each lesson.

By way of background, the Big Picture Curriculum was introduced in 2017 with the input of staff members across all phases and stages of education locally. A framework was devised as a first step in the development of the curriculum and the intention at that time was to continue seamlessly to complete the content development phase. This phase was delayed due to political changes in the Committee last term. This activity was then picked up by this Committee and progressed as fast as the interruptions caused by the second COVID-19 lockdown and subsequent restrictions allowed.

Settings have been running to catch up and, in the round, have been expected to deal with, inter alia, the pressures of COVID-19 'bounce back' activity and the introduction of a new inspection regime.

Our Education Strategy has provided a route map through the considerable workload and pulled together strategic priorities. These include:

- Ensuring that our curriculum at all phases reflects the needs of all learners and is appropriately broad, diverse, creative and ambitious
- Ensuring that our education system equips learners with the knowledge and skills, so they are able to succeed wherever they are, either within or beyond the Bailiwick, now and in the future

The Bailiwick Curriculum is designed to be - and must be - dynamic, adaptable and able to continually evolve.

The curriculum does not and should never stand still. Its purpose in any society is to meet the needs of the community by equipping its children and young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to be valuable contributors.

As part of the curriculum's evolution, considerable work to flesh out the essential knowledge that learners should acquire to help them develop the skills described in the Bailiwick Curriculum has taken place. This work was shared with States Members at a presentation on curriculum and standards as part of a series of webinars inducting States Members on the 'education eco-system' earlier this political term.

Building on and improving work started under the predecessor Committee, a series of ‘entitlement documents’ have been produced by officers and teachers working in partnership. These detailed subject knowledge maps now exist for 14 subjects (with maths being treated differently) and describe the knowledge children should know in each of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. By way of example, appended to this reply is an extract from the Geography Entitlement document (Appendix 1).

The work outlining the essential core knowledge to which learners in the Bailiwick are entitled is not a repudiation of the Bailiwick curriculum but a fulfilment of it and was an intended part of the long-term plan regarding the Bailiwick Curriculum’s development.

**Knowledge and skills in combination are vital parts of the learning process.** Knowledge is the enabler of skill. Knowledge without skilful application is largely pointless and skill without knowledge is impossible.

With the exception of St Sampson’s High School, none of the reports quoted from above indicate that Ofsted judged their curriculum to be ‘inadequate’. Indeed, in 5 of the reports cited in the introduction to the questions above, schools were graded as ‘good’ for quality of education – the section under which curriculum sits. Of the 11 inspection reports published so far, six settings receive a ‘good’ rating for the Quality of Education category.

The Ofsted framework is rightly demanding and expects schools to have a detailed and well implemented curriculum in every subject. It is very common, even in England where Ofsted is also used as an inspectorate, which has had a knowledge-rich curriculum since 2016, for schools to receive similar comments to those listed above, even when judged as ‘good’.

**2. Does the Committee share the clear findings of Ofsted that too often teachers are not making clear what specific knowledge they want their pupils to learn, understand and retain?**

**Response:**

Ofsted is required to identify and recommend areas for improvements and the Committee recognises and welcomes Ofsted’s comments about areas for improvement in curriculum delivery whatever their focus might be.

**3. Is the Committee prioritising its response to the pattern of findings expressed by Ofsted in relation to the local curriculum needing to be far more specific about what knowledge Guernsey children need to learn? If “yes”, when can we expect to see significant reforms in this regard? If “no” what is the value of seeking the views of Ofsted by the inspection process?**

**Response:**

The Committee has a sharp focus on developing and supporting a culture of continuous improvement. That this has been a significant part of the work of the Committee, the Education Office and staff in settings should have been apparent from the communications, public statements, Annual Reports etc. from the Committee since the beginning of the term. The continuous evolution of the curriculum is a key part of this.

As is evident from English Ofsted reports, it takes time for curriculum development work to have an impact on what learners know and can do. Schools in England have been developing detailed curriculums since 2016 and yet still have many 'good' schools where there is more work to be done in this regard. Locally, Education Improvement Officers report from their visits to schools that curriculum development is beginning to have significant impact. A long-term project such as this will take time to have full effect, but we are heartened by the pace of progress we have seen during our term of office.

All schools share an in-depth and honest self-evaluation of their curriculum development with their Interim Governors at each Interim Governance Board meeting of which, to date, there have been at least five for each setting. Senior leaders are challenged and supported to make the necessary improvements. These 'curriculum health checks' are validated with Education Development Officers as part of the cycle of school improvement monitoring and support visits. The progress schools and settings are making to address this is also described in [Our Education Strategy Annual Reports](#). There is a shared determination to continually improve in this area, which is a joint focus for the Committee, the Interim Governance Boards, our schools/settings and the Education Team.

Though impacted by COVID-19, delaying the further development of curriculum entitlement documents, their development has been included as a workstream in previous and existing workplans. As planned, it has taken over two years to complete, with the last document being finalised in January 2024. On completion of each entitlement document, there is then a lead-in period of 18 months during which training takes place to enable subject leaders to become familiar with them. Subject leaders then train teachers in their own schools.

To date, the new curriculum entitlement documents for geography, history, art, maths and computing are mandatory. From September 2024 it will be mandatory to teach the content of the curriculum entitlement documents in design technology and some aspects of English. In September 2025 it will be mandatory to teach the content in every subject. Many schools have chosen to accelerate these timelines and are already using the documents in full.

In addition to the creation of entitlement documents, schools are required to report on the effectiveness of each subject of the curriculum as part of the validation of their self-

evaluation. This report is provided to - and scrutinised by - the relevant Interim Governance Board.

Each school also has at least one formal visit by officers each year to evaluate at least two subjects. The report from this visit is also discussed by the Interim Governance Boards.

As part of the Transforming Education Programme, the four high schools within the Secondary School Partnership are aligning their curriculums so that by September 2025, when there will be three high schools, they will all be using the same detailed curriculum plans and resources, which flesh out in even more detail the content within the curriculum entitlement documents. In order to facilitate this work, Curriculum Alignment Leads have been appointed for each subject. The Education Office is working in partnership with the curriculum alignment leads to ensure that the aligned curriculum follows the guidance contained within Ofsted's subject review reports.

**4. Would the Committee agree that where other jurisdictions have experimented in moving their core curriculums away from a bedrock of knowledge towards a 'skills based' approach to teaching it has consistently resulted in a lowering of educational standards and outcomes?**

**Response:**

The Committee's view is that the evidence presents a mixed picture. Scotland and Wales both have a skills-based approach to the curriculum and are not doing well in international assessments such as PISA<sup>1</sup>. The factors affecting attainment, however, are too complex to draw straightforward inferences from a jurisdiction's official curriculum position; it would appear reasonable though to suggest that having a pure skills-based curriculum that ignores the enabling role of knowledge might be one that risks underperformance.

**This is not the position locally, the Big Picture Curriculum acknowledges that knowledge plays a key role in our curriculum as discussed in the answer to question 1.**

**5. Would the Committee agree that if the crucial role of acquiring specific knowledge is downgraded, either in the local curriculum or in the way the curriculum is delivered, that should be a matter of grave concern, given the outcomes experienced when tried elsewhere?**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reformscotland.com/2023/12/pisa-2022-in-scotland-declining-attainment-and-growing-social-inequality-lindsay-paterson/>

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/education/school-standards-wales-drop-again-28216255>



**Response:**

The Committee would agree that if the crucial role of acquiring specific knowledge is downgraded, this should be a matter of concern. To say it would be of *grave* concern might be to overstate the validity of the inference that can be made in what is a complex area, which requires significantly more explanation and exploration than can be offered in response to these Rule 14 Questions. However, as 'downgrading' is not a feature of the curriculum being developed in our schools and is the antithesis of any aim of the Committee in its work, this concern is not a valid one in the local context.

**6. What is being done to raise the expectations of pupils and help them to maximise their potential?****Response:**

The Committee has taken - and has empowered leaders to take - wide-ranging steps in this regard, including:

- Improving diagnostic assessments used by teachers to adapt teaching to learner need, thereby ensuring that lesson planning has regard to specific learners, and has been adapted so that every learner is able to access the curriculum. It is this high quality inclusive teaching practice that will ensure all learners make good progress.
- Moving away from teacher assessment to standardised assessment in primary schools, so that it is possible to more objectively and consistently assess the impact of teaching and learning and the curriculum. By analysing data from standardised assessment, it is possible to identify areas for development with curriculum delivery promptly and provide appropriate support to ensure rapid improvement.
- Ongoing support and challenge for schools' curriculum development, including accessing detailed schemes of work for secondary maths and science, rather than designing these elements of the curriculum from scratch locally. By using these high-quality resources teachers can focus on ensuring that consistent progress is made, over time, in these key subjects.
- Training for subject leaders to help develop their understanding of what 'good' looks like in their subject and how to develop capacity within their school/setting. This ensures teaching keeps pace with best practice and continually evaluate the impact of the curriculum on their learners.
- Follow-on support and challenge for secondary schools from external partners to support building on the maths reviews in 2022. Like the English review before it, the maths review has helped to identify areas where rapid improvement are needed. Given the number of changes taking place across the education system in a short period of time (as referred to in the response to question 1 above), additional

resources, to those provided by the Education Improvement Team, have been made available to support and coach school staff.

- Visits by senior leaders and subject leaders from both Guernsey and Alderney to schools in England where there is evidence of strong curriculum and pedagogical practice, so that these staff could see first-hand what 'good' and 'outstanding' practice looks like and could benefit from peer-to-peer information sharing and networking.
- Implementing a two-year CPD programme in all schools and settings on high quality inclusive teaching starting in September 2024.
- Front-loading high-quality training and increased non-teaching time for teachers in the first two years of their career, supported by mentors, following the English Early Careers Teacher framework model.
- Publishing a literacy framework detailing evidence-informed practices that schools and settings are expected to follow, to ensure that all learners develop the literacy skills necessary to access the curriculum in all subjects.
- Yearly cycle of activities to validate schools' and settings' self-evaluation enabling the early identification of concerns, and the facilitation of the support necessary to resolve difficulties with the minimum of intervention, including:
  - interrogating data, curriculum documents and health checks
  - surveys
  - lesson observations
  - talking to learners and staff
  - reviewing learners' workall of which is reported to the school's Interim Governance Board where it is scrutinised to ensure the right level of support is in place.
- Focused support process for schools where there are concerns, including:
  - monthly scrutiny of improvement activity by officers and an Interim Governor
  - more frequent (than the norm) monitoring activity.
- The development and embedding of the Education Strategy Network, comprising representatives from every school/setting ensuring that Our Education Strategy is used as a tool to support staff and learners and is at the forefront of our strategic planning.

## Appendix 1: -

### The Bailiwick Curriculum

Below is a small extract from Geography Entitlement document. It illustrates the knowledge learners should acquire on a specific topic at each Key Stage through a variety of learning experiences.

Key Stage One (Ages 5 to 7)	Key Stage Two (Ages 8-11)	Key Stage Three (Ages 12-16)
<b>Landscapes (L):</b> a. Know how to describe physical and human features of landscapes.  b. Know the following geographical vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ beach</li> <li>○ city</li> <li>○ cliff</li> <li>○ coast</li> <li>○ dune</li> <li>○ farm</li> <li>○ field</li> <li>○ forest</li> <li>○ harbour</li> <li>○ hill</li> <li>○ house</li> <li>○ lake</li> <li>○ mountain</li> <li>○ ocean</li> <li>○ office</li> <li>○ pond</li> <li>○ port</li> <li>○ sea</li> <li>○ shop</li> <li>○ soil</li> <li>○ stream</li> <li>○ town</li> <li>○ village</li> <li>○ woodland</li> </ul>	<b>Landscapes (L):</b> <b>Coasts:</b> a. Know how to describe the physical features of a beach. b. Know that waves shape the coast. c. Know that there are different types of coastal defences (sea wall, rock armour, dunes). d. Know that tides are caused by gravitational forces. e. Know the following geographical vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ arch</li> <li>○ beach</li> <li>○ cave</li> <li>○ cliff</li> <li>○ coastline</li> <li>○ erosion</li> <li>○ granite</li> <li>○ stack</li> <li>○ stump</li> <li>○ tide</li> <li>○ vegetation</li> <li>○ waves</li> </ul>	<b>Landscapes (L):</b> <b>Coasts:</b> a. Know the processes of erosion, transportation and deposition that shape the coasts. b. Know how coastal defences are used to protect communities. c. Know the arguments for and against using coastal defences. d. Know the challenges associated with sea level rise e. Know the causes and challenges associated with pollution. f. Know that climate change will bring challenges to coastal environments and people.  <b>Rivers:</b> g. Know the processes that shape rivers from its source to its mouth. h. Know how rivers can be managed. i. Know the arguments for and against river management. j. Know the causes of flooding. k. Know the impact that flooding events can have on people. l. Know that climate change will bring challenges to environments and people.