

Fourth Partnership meeting – 26th June 2015

ESC Business Plan and focus on Autonomy (also to identify other areas of the business plan to develop a specific plan for the Partnership)

Giving schools greater autonomy, or freedoms, is a key priority for the department. It was agreed by the Partnership that following this meeting members should have a clearer understand by what is meant by autonomy in Jersey schools and what this could look like in the future.

Why is autonomy a priority?

It was explained that at present we do not have schools that are led. Instead they are managed. This results in a work environment which stifles creativity, risk taking and accountability. To raise standards schools must be daring, ambitious and be imaginative. Creative schools need control over the tools at their disposal with decisions being made closer to the classroom.

What mistakes can be learned from?

- **Greater autonomy can lead to more controls exerted on teaching staff** - It was noted by the Partnership of examples given where schools have been given greater freedoms from previously held central control and this has resulted in head teachers becoming more controlling over the rest of the school.
- **Inefficiencies especially in Jersey** – In time of financial constraint it is prudent to ensure value for money is achieved and decisions made are based on an informed view. Due to the size of Jersey it may not be possible to achieve economies of scale in particular areas when compared to how schools have managed their budgets following greater autonomy in England.
- **Distraction from teaching and learning** – Greater autonomy can lead Senior Leadership Teams to spend more time on management issues rather than pedagogy.
- **Post code lottery** – Depending on the school, where it is located and its context, this can lead to differing outcomes once autonomy is awarded.
- **Capacity of head teachers to become more autonomous** – Not all head teachers are ready for their schools to take on more autonomy, possibly due to capacity or skills.

Red line areas

The Partnership agreed the following areas should not be considered when identifying the areas in which schools could be awarded greater autonomy:

- **Pay and conditions** - having one set of pay and conditions for all States schools in Jersey is both pragmatic and sensible as otherwise this can lead to a distraction for the department, cause staff turmoil and distracts from teaching and learning;
- **Safeguarding** – there should be a single set of arrangements, adopting the policies for the centre;
- **Common SEN arrangements;**
- **Financial controls** – greater freedoms but publically accountable due to current funding arrangements from the States of Jersey. However, more delegation should be in place;
- **Core curriculum** – it is important in Jersey to maintain focus on history, geography etc, plus the teaching of the curriculum is enshrined in law. The Curriculum Council also acts as a body to review and permit changes. Schools will be encouraged (when earned) to have some autonomy to decide how parts of the core curriculum are taught e.g. languages and IT and schools will develop their entitlements for their pupils;
- **Standard academic year.**

The Partnership noted the formal agreement that the red lines identified above should not be considered further when seeking to provide schools with great autonomy. The next steps will be for the Partnership to identify the areas in which greater autonomy can be agreed on and taken further.

Teaching Staff Survey *(to discuss arrangements for the distribution and then collation / communication of the findings)*

The Partnership agreed it would be more appropriate to release the survey at the beginning of the autumn term and to coincide with the Battle of Britain inset day. Head teacher will be asked if they could allow their staff team 30 minutes on this day to complete the survey. The same will be asked of Highlands College to allow staff time to complete the survey on one of their professional development days.

Education Conference *(future event[s] for teachers to share ideas and information)*

Officers from Education will begin the process of identifying a suitable date for a staff conference.