

**REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF
THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
TO QUESTIONS ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE
RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY LAURIE QUERIPPEL**

Question

Can the Department confirm that some teachers, particularly in the subject areas of ICT and RE, who were allowed to leave under the States Voluntary Severance Scheme at the end of 2013 have been replaced by supply teachers?

Answer

The States Voluntary Severance Programme is a confidential process between the individual and the States of Guernsey. For this reason the Education Department is unable to comment in detail on specific cases or say anything that might serve to identify individuals.

Teachers and other staff may leave their posts for any number of reasons including promotion, maternity leave, sabbatical, end of housing licence etc. By way of example, the Education Department can recruit to around 70 to 80 vacancies per year because of normal staff turnover.

The purpose of the Voluntary Severance Programme was to deliver financial savings, the opportunity to improve public services and the opportunity to improve capability. As Deputy Langlois said in a media release circulated on 17 January: *'This programme was put in place to make savings through reducing posts, without reducing the ability of departments to deliver services.'*

17 teachers were accepted for voluntary severance, the majority of whom will leave the employment of the States at the end of the academic year. This is different from the majority of VS requests approved, most of whom left at the end of the calendar year.

In the very small number of cases where a teacher's application for voluntary severance was agreed and they left at the end of the calendar year rather than the academic year, this was only approved after careful consideration and consultation with the school. It was recognised that this would necessitate making alternative arrangements to cover the classes for the remainder of the academic year. At all times, the needs of the students were at the forefront of any decisions taken.

Question

If so, why was this allowed to happen as surely the reason behind teachers being accepted for the Scheme is that they are surplus to staffing requirements?

Answer.

Granting a request for voluntary severance is not just down to a member of staff being surplus to requirements. As highlighted in the Question & Answer document which formed part of the media release circulated by Policy Council in January: *'The programme gave an opportunity for reorganisation and restructuring. To illustrate, three people may have accepted VS and through reconfiguration of work and reorganisation it may have been necessary to create one new post, perhaps at a different level. There is a net benefit but it is not the total cost of all three individuals, in this example.'*

One of the stated aims of the programme was to provide an opportunity to improve capability, or skills, and therefore in a number of cases it was identified that a person would have to be replaced fully but the skill set the organisation required was different. This is the reason that the target payback was a maximum of 36 months.

The Education Department has used the opportunity presented by the Voluntary Severance Programme to restructure education provision in some areas. Parents should feel reassured that schools have the needs of their pupils at the heart of any decisions which are made with regards to staffing.

Question

Can the Department confirm that some teachers accepted for the Scheme were in any case close to retirement?

Answer

The age of the applicant was taken into account when approving the request for Voluntary Severance.

Question

Is it true that in some cases teachers who were accepted for the Scheme have since been reemployed on a part time basis?

Answer

This is not true. All those who accepted Voluntary Severance were required to sign an agreement confirming that they will not be employed by the States for a period of three years from the date of termination of their employment. This includes working as supply staff, bank staff, short term contract staff, fixed-term contract staff, seasonal, casual, hourly paid staff, temporary, casual or consultancy contracts. If they did wish to work for the States within the 3-year period they would be required to pay back the full severance package they received.

The Education Department notes the above responses took approximately two hours of senior officer time to prepare at an approximate cost of £160.

Date of Receipt of the Questions: 21st February 2014

Date of Reply: 3rd March 2014
