

LA MARE DE CARTERET PROPOSALS – MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE 20-11-14

Is the High School being built too big?

A 480 pupil high school at La Mare de Carteret, which has been suggested by some, would be too small, would restrict the curriculum offer, would not fit all the students in in a few years and would not give equality of educational opportunity to those young people living in La Mare de Carteret catchment area.

The Education Department maintains the view that a 600 student school remains the most appropriate size for the High School for a number of reasons:

- We are not just building for the here and now – we are building for a 60 year plus life span.
- We have used Policy Council population projections and allowed for a 5% uplift for future proofing – projections are just that, there are considerable uncertainties, not least the need for the Island to experience further economic growth to counter the problems of our ageing population.
- If Guernsey is to maintain economic growth then it is highly probable that the States will at some time in the not too distant future have to allow for some population growth and if that is to happen then the States will need to have sufficient capacity in its schools. The investment decision facing the States at the November meeting is a classic example of decision making under uncertainty. There will never be perfect information and it would be unacceptable for the future cohorts of students at the La Mare de Carteret High School to defer a decision until such time as population issues are resolved. The Education Department believes it is recommending a prudent strategic plan which will provide flexibility to the States of Guernsey and avoid extra financial costs and operational disruption to the schools in future years.
- Policy Council population predictions, with the 5% uplift, indicate that we will need:
 - Up to 720 pupil places at St. Sampson’s High School
 - Up to 660 pupil places at Les Beaucamps High School
 - Up to 600 pupil places for 11-16 years olds at the Grammar School & Sixth Form Centre
 - Up to 600 pupil places at La Mare de Carteret High School
- The difference between including the 5% uplift or not equates to 123 students. In the current set up of schools at secondary level, the five years from 11-16 means that, with the forms of entry that will be operating across Guernsey’s secondary phase, there will be at least 105 classes being held during each period of the day, and that’s not counting additional classes operating to allow a range of options to be taught for GCSE. So for each class, the class size difference, if we calculated the need for places without the 5% uplift, would be just over one pupil per class less.
- The Education Department must maintain a certain amount of flexibility within its total secondary school capacity to cope with any fluctuations in numbers. In future we would balance numbers across the schools to maximise curriculum opportunities.
- Primary School progress and attainment data indicates that secondary school levels of attainment will continue to rise making the Guernsey Federation of Secondary Schools a

more attractive offer to parents who might be considering sending their children to one of the grant aided colleges than was the case previously.

- Increasing fees at the grant-aided Colleges and further pressure on household disposable incomes may also have an impact on numbers going into the Grammar School and High Schools. The Department's modelling of school projections has assumed on a prudent basis that the current level of buy out to the grant aided colleges remains at constant levels. This is a conservative assumption and a credible downside scenario should include a reduction in the % buy out to the colleges.
- In line with States risk management and business continuity procedures, Education must carefully manage the potential risk of a school being unable to continue operating for whatever reason. If one of our schools is fully or partially out of action we still need to provide education to our learners and we would require flexibility within our overall capacity to cope with an unexpected catastrophic event. This does not mean that the Education Department is seeking to have a school in moth-balls on standby in the event of a catastrophic event, but to apply the concepts of 'just in time' provision is simply not appropriate and sensible in an educational context.

What do the professionals think?

- The current Headteacher has said that in terms of being able to provide equality of access this would be more difficult with a smaller school as it would close options and pathways for students. Even with the Federation, there would remain a need for a curriculum taught by specialist teachers to be provided in each school.
- For the avoidance of doubt, staffing levels at the High School will be based on actual student numbers and not the number that could be accommodated.
- We must consider La Mare de Carteret High School as one element of the Guernsey Federation of Secondary Schools and it is important to look at the system capacity as opposed to the capacity of the school in isolation. To operate one school at capacity would pose serious operational difficulties and limit the ability of the Department to manage cohort numbers each year. Without flexibility it is possible that siblings may not be able to attend the same school and catchment boundaries would have to be considered and potentially changed each year.
- All students deserve access to equality of educational opportunity in line with the States Social Policy and highlighted as one of the core values of the Education Department's Vision, as unanimously endorsed by the States in July 2013.

Summary

The Education Department is firmly of the view that the school is correctly specified for 600 students as the Department was looking at La Mare de Carteret High School as part of the Education system and not as simply a single site. The Education Department is taking a systems view and providing a legacy which would allow future Education Boards and future States of Guernsey to have some flexibility in the provision of secondary education, instead of saddling them with operational difficulties and limited options in the future. The Education Department is firmly committed to strategic policy and planning and wishes to avoid the usual "Guernsey compromise" solution which a future States will have to address.