

**REPORT
TO
JERSEY COMMUNITY RELATIONS TRUST
ON
CHOICE, WELL-BEING AND OPPORTUNITY
IN THE
JERSEY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the research

- This report explores issues of choice, opportunity and wellbeing in Jersey's schools, based on the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of pupils, parents, teachers and other stakeholders.
- The research involved interviews with pupils, parents and teachers from 8 state primary schools, 1 private primary school, 3 state secondary schools and 2 private secondary schools.
- Pupils, parents and teachers from 43 schools and 1 college also completed a questionnaire survey – including 134 primary pupils, 34 primary teachers and 103 parents of primary pupils; and 647 secondary pupils, 41 secondary teachers and 184 parents of secondary pupils.

Choice

- The research investigated the information available on school choice, subject options and extra-curricular activities in primary and secondary schools in Jersey.
- A catchment area system for non-fee paying primary and secondary schools was found to constrain choice in practice, although parents and pupils still sought information on the options available across the system.
- Written information was found to be widely distributed by schools at both primary and secondary level, suggesting that – regardless of the catchment system – schools endeavoured to communicate effectively with prospective pupils and parents.
- Open days and school visits were used by the vast majority of pupils and parents, and these were found to be a particularly popular and valuable source of information.
- Word-of-mouth appeared to be extremely important for circulating information about schools in Jersey, although this raises questions about equal access to information for those with narrower social networks; for example, recent migrants.
- Official information, especially on the internet, was perceived to be inadequate by some parents, who wanted greater transparency regarding school performance.

Opportunity

- The research also explored the opportunities that pupils and parents had to make decisions between schools, subjects and extra-curricular activities, and the extent to which these decisions related to broader educational or employment opportunities.
- Pupils and parents generally felt in control of their decision-making, although the catchment area system was acknowledged to constrain the opportunity to choose between state schools, and the appeal process was seen as difficult to navigate.
- Pupils rarely expressed strong feelings over school choice and few would have preferred to attend an alternative fee-paying or non-catchment school.
- Some secondary pupils felt pressure from teachers when making subject choices and many complained that timetabling restricted their choice of optional subjects.
- Secondary schools were praised for providing a broad range of extra-curricular activities; primary schools were seen to offer fewer opportunities in this regard.
- Pupils and parents defended the quality of non-fee paying secondary schools in Jersey, although it was felt that (some) state secondary schools suffered unfairly from reputational stigma surrounding standards of behaviour and academic achievement.
- Employers suggested that state schools would benefit from stronger links with business and that school leavers' skills could be better matched to the labour market.

Well-being

- The research provided some additional insights into wellbeing within Jersey's education system; in terms of satisfaction, inclusion and future aspirations.
- Parents and pupils generally felt satisfied with their schools, which were felt to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment, although transitions between primary and secondary school constituted a source of anxiety for pupils.
- Some secondary pupils felt that state schools could do more to challenge them academically, while others complained of disruption in class.

- Primary and secondary schools were seen to offer good support for pupils with special educational needs, although parents were often required to initiate support for their children.
- Schools appeared to be responding well to the needs of pupils for whom English was an additional language, although parents could benefit from additional language support.
- Fears were expressed over inclusion and cohesion within Jersey's wider community and the extent to which this impacted on pupils from minority backgrounds.
- Parents held high aspirations towards their children's education, although some were concerned about the costs of higher education. In contrast, teachers appeared more cautious and suggested that some pupils' motivation and ability hindered their progress.
- Both primary and secondary pupils felt confident about their futures and held aspirations to exceed their parents' level of education and/or employment status.