

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

Abridged Report

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¹ *Acknowledgements.* We wish to record our gratitude to Dr Christina Chinas who undertook fieldwork for this project, Dr Daniel Kilburn for providing editorial support in the final drafting of this report, to Jersey Community Relations Trust for commissioning the research, and to the States of Jersey for their support and guidance. Most of all, our sincere thanks to all those pupils, parents, teachers, heads and community stakeholders who gave so generously of their time.

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A fuller version of this report, which includes further analysis of the data, is available.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores issues of choice, opportunity, and well-being within Jersey's schools, based on the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of pupils, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders.

Choice

- A catchment area system constrains choice for state primary and secondary schools, 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 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

- Pupils and parents generally felt in control of their decision-making, although the catchment area system was seen to constrain choices between state schools and the appeal process was seen as difficult to navigate.
- Few pupils held strong feelings over school choice and few would have preferred to attend an alternative 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

- Parents and pupils generally felt satisfied with their schools, which were seen to provide a supportive learning environment, although transitions between primary and secondary school created anxiety for some 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 sometimes required to initiate this support.
- 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.
- Despite the efforts of schools, fears were expressed over inclusion and cohesion within Jersey's wider community.
- 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.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

This report explores issues of choice, opportunity, and wellbeing within Jersey's schools. The aim of the study was to investigate the choices and options available to parents and pupils, the opportunities which pupils and parents have to make and pursue decisions over education, and the extent to which the wellbeing of pupils and families is affected by these decisions. This research is based on the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of pupils, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders the education system. This report therefore seeks to reflect the views of people who participated in our research. In doing so, it goes beyond measures of results or outcomes, to instead offer a picture of how people experience choice, opportunity, and wellbeing within Jersey's schools.

Chapter One offers a brief introduction to the conceptual framework that informed this research, followed by an outline of the methods used for this research and a breakdown of the characteristics of the research participants.

Chapter Two explores the question of choice within Jersey's school system, by focusing on the information available to pupils and parents when making choices between schools, subjects, or extra-curricular activities. **Chapter Three** explores the opportunities available to pupils and parents to make and exercise decisions within primary and secondary education, as well as within later life. **Chapter Four** explores wellbeing of pupils within Jersey's schools, focusing on issues including overall satisfaction, aspirations for the future, and inclusion for pupils with particular learning needs.

The Conceptual Framework: Choice, Opportunity and Well-Being

The theoretical framework used in this research is based on the so-called *capability approach*

developed by the Nobel Prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen². This approach emphasises the importance of choice, opportunity, and well-being as measures for quality of life in any social, economic and political system. Education is included as one the key indicators of human development in his approach. Schooling impacts on the ability of people to participate meaningfully in society and Sen's capability approach draws attention to the education as a component of individual freedom and quality of life.

There are many different approaches to gauging the effectiveness of school systems: changes in pupil attainment over time; employment rates or progression to further education; or pupils' aspirations, self-belief, or happiness. In data-rich systems like the UK, it is possible to use such measures to gauge school effectiveness. However, it is difficult to use these measures to fully understand how parents and pupils actually feel about the potential to make informed choices, pursue their desired opportunities, and enjoy a level of well-being, within education. It was clear from preliminary discussions with schools and other stakeholders that existing ways of thinking about school effectiveness were not reflecting perceptions of Jersey's schools in these respects. The study therefore uses an adapted version of Sen's capability approach as an alternative framework for understanding choice, opportunity and well-being in Jersey's schools.

Key ideas

As an opposed to narrow measures of outcomes, such as exam results, Sen's approach focuses instead on the range of freedoms that individuals may or may not have to pursue the life choices they value. The approach emphasises these 'capabilities' to achieve important outcomes in

² Sen, A.K. (1993) 'Capability and Well-being', in: M. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds) *The Quality of Life* (Oxford, Clarendon Press).

Table 1: The meaning of key terms from the capability approach, as applied to schooling

Capability	A student's <i>capability</i> represents the combination of outcomes which they achieve from their education, both over the shorter and longer term. Capabilities are difficult to measure, as they likely involve a wide range of ways in which a pupil might use their education – as well as the skills and experiences offered by their schooling – throughout their lives.
Choice	<i>Choice</i> is an essential precursor to capabilities, because people cannot achieve the outcomes they desire in life without knowing the full range of choices that are available to them. Choices in education may include the choice of which school to attend, which subjects to take (at secondary level), and a choice of extra-curricular activities on offer. This report considers choice in relation to the information available to pupils and parents regarding these and other aspects of schooling.
Opportunity	<i>Opportunity</i> relates to the ability to make decisions. It relates to how far pupils and parents are able to act on the choices they make, for instance, to achieve a place at their desired school, study their preferred range of subjects, or take advantage of the extra-curricular activities on offer. So, while <i>choice</i> relates to informing decision-making, <i>opportunity</i> relates to the ability to act on decisions. However, opportunity alone offers no guarantee of satisfaction or achievement.
Wellbeing	<i>Wellbeing</i> offers a subjective (i.e. personal) evaluation of the outcomes from the choices and opportunities available to pupils during their schooling. In other words, it relates to a student's assessment of their own capabilities, both now and in the future. However, because wellbeing is subjective by definition, it cannot easily be measured and instead it reflects individuals' own attitudes, opinions or perceptions.

life (such as having a job), alongside the ability of people to live their lives in ways they value. This approach is applied to this research through the related notions of choice, opportunity and well-being, as defined in **Table 1** below:

This approach therefore considers the full range of options, decisions and outcomes which make up pupil's capabilities and provides a framework for exploring these in terms of the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of pupils, families, and teachers. This requires us to look beyond exam results or other one-dimensional measures to consider the processes through which pupils make and pursue the decisions they value most.

Data Collection

Three main methods of data collection were used for this study, combining a questionnaire survey (administered online and in hard-copy) and in-depth, face-to-face interviews. This allowed the researchers to gain a strong evidence base for this report and to corroborate our findings through different sources of evidence and insight.

The key features of the research design involved:

- Individual and group interviews to collect *qualitative* (non-numeric) research data, conducted over 41 days of face-to-face research in 14 schools (8 primary, 6 secondary).

- An online and hard-copy questionnaire to collect *quantitative* (numerical) data administered in 43 schools and 1 college.
- The participation of school governors, head-teachers and business leaders.
- A total of 134 primary students completed the questionnaire, 60% were female, 74% were born in Jersey.
- A total of 34 teachers from 17 primary schools completed the questionnaire, 73% of whom were female, 52% were born in the UK and 48% in Jersey.
- A total of 103 parents of primary pupils responded to the questionnaire, of which 88% were female, 39% were born in the UK, 30% in Jersey and 17% in Portugal, with the remainder other countries. Nearly half (46%) had GCSE or A levels, and 38% had university-level qualifications
- A total of 647 secondary pupils completed the questionnaire, with an equal number of males and females. Just over three-quarters (77%) were born in Jersey and 15% spoke English as an additional language.
- A total of 184 parents of secondary pupils replied to the questionnaire, 77% of whom were women, 39% were born in the UK, 36% in Jersey and 15% in Portugal, 45% had either GCSEs or A-levels, a 34% had a university diploma or degree.
- A total of 41 secondary school teachers completed the questionnaire, of which 78% were female and half were born in Jersey,

CHAPTER 2: CHOICE

Choice is a crucial element of individual freedom and a precursor to personal, social, and economic opportunities and well-being. Choice requires that pupils and parents have access to information that is relevant, accurate, and of high quality. This chapter therefore examines the nature of information concerning school choice, curriculum/subject options, and extra-curricular activities, which is provided to pupils in primary and secondary schools in Jersey.

Primary Schooling

Pupils, parents and teachers were asked about the main sources of information for choosing a primary school in Jersey. A large number of pupils had received written information from prospective schools in the form of leaflets (62%), letters (75%), and information packs (47%) from local catchment schools. Pupils reported receiving far less information from non-catchment schools, although their parents did receive some written information from these schools. Primary staff also emphasised the importance of information from local schools, although they felt that government offices (21%) and websites (39%) were a source of information.

Primary school pupils reported that the majority of information on school choice came from their parents (60%). Parents were seen to be less important as sources of information about after-school activities (37%). More than three-quarters of pupils (78%) visited prospective schools on open days or on other occasions (59%). Parents appeared not to rely heavily on teachers (36%) for information on school choices, although they were seen as more important than neighbours and friends (17%). In contrast, primary school teachers perceived that schools constituted the greatest source of information, both in terms of materials on school choice (41%) and information on after-school activities (85%).

Formal sources of information

Further insights into the information available to primary school pupils came from interview discussions with parents, pupils, and teachers. Most pupils described getting information about schools from their parents:

I didn't get a lot of information; I think it was mostly my parents. [Year 6 boy]

When seeking information on school choices, parents or families tended to visit the schools they are interested in, as this headteacher from a public primary school explained:

Parents would also come to the front door and talk to staff. I think it's more a parental choice. I don't think children have a lot of information.

Jersey schools were also distributed formal information regarding extra-curricular activities. Primary schools send letters home to inform parents and their children about the after-school activities available, and teachers typically invite children to the activities they run:

For netball, I got information from my teachers and for Portuguese lessons it was from the headteacher here. [Year 6 girl]

Schools and teachers therefore constituted the main sources of formal information received by primary pupils and parents.

Informal sources of information

Imperfect though they are, school league tables constitute an important source of information. As there are no league tables published in Jersey, word of mouth and social networks constitute a major source of informal information on schools:

On the whole, parents would [rely on] outside school recommendations. The island is a small community. [Primary school headteacher]

I think parents consider where their

neighbours' or other family members' children go. Because Jersey is small you can have very good word of mouth. You can get genuine information from children, rather than counting on the prospectus. [Business person]

Interestingly, while some interviewees implied that a 'small island' sense of community helped to circulate informal information about schools – families who had recently migrated to Jersey also appeared to feel able to rely on word of mouth from their own social networks:

With our Portuguese families, if they find a particular school that works well, they talk to each other within their community. [Primary school headteacher]

I got my information from my mum's friend. [Year 6 pupil, born outside the UK]

In the absence of league tables or 'official' sources of information other than those originating from schools, parents and pupils therefore appear to rely on word of mouth from communities and social networks. However, this does raise questions as to whether all of Jersey's residents have equal access to this information.

Quality of Information

Pupils who responded to our questionnaire reported that the clarity of the information they received was very good. Pupils also indicated that the found school visits and open days to be very helpful. The vast majority (94%) of parents had also attended an open day and most reported these visits to be very helpful. The majority of parents also felt that the information they had received concerning school choice and after-school activities was clear. However, while primary teachers agreed that the information regarding after-school activities was clear and of good quality, they felt that the material on school choice needed significant improvement.

Interviewees provided some additional insight into the quality of the information which families received or accessed. In particular, there was some disagreement over the quality of the information available on the internet:

The State publishes a whole range of choice if you log on to the website. There are good websites that give you whatever information [you want] [Parent of Year 6 pupil]

Although others suggested that the information provided online was not easily accessible:

It needs to be more accessible on the Internet and more info given out, like contact persons, etc. The people who are local and have been here know the info, but for people who are coming in, we don't have any knowledge or friends or family here. It is a limbo. [Mother of a Year 6 pupil, from outside the UK]

Once again, people appeared to turn towards 'informal' sources of information as a result:

There is a 'Mums in Jersey' Facebook page that supports other mums. So if you have a question you can always ask them, [thought it] doesn't mean that the answers they give are always the right ones! [Mother of Year 6 pupil]

Despite the potential for the internet to provide a widely accessible source of information, our findings suggest that the information about primary schools provided online was inadequate. This also provides additional evidence that the lack of information available may disadvantage families who are new to Jersey.

Secondary Schooling

Choices over which secondary school to attend are also constrained by the catchment system. However, this does not negate the importance of information for pupils and families. Information can help prepare pupils for the transition between primary and secondary education. Equally, this section also focuses on information regarding subject/curriculum choices within secondary

education, as well as information about extra-curricular activities.

Types and sources of information

Pupils, parents, and teachers who responded to our questionnaire were asked about the types and sources of information available when making choices about secondary schools. Pupils received a substantial amount of information when they were considering their choice of secondary school, mainly from their local catchment school, and in the form of information packs (73%), letters (73%), and leaflets (70%). A smaller proportion of pupils also received materials from non-catchment schools (28%) and from government offices (27%) or the internet (32%). Parents received similar information to pupils. Less than a quarter of parents obtained information from government offices (22%) and websites (25%). Over three-quarters (76%) of parents reported attending an open day at their local secondary schools.

Pupils and pupils were asked about the most important sources of information they were most likely to turn to when choosing a secondary school. Pupils reported that schools were the main source of information regarding secondary schools and a lower proportion (25%) of secondary pupils relied on their parents, compared to primary pupils. However, few pupils (16%) listed secondary schools themselves as the main sources of information on school choice, compared to primary schools (43%). In contrast, the vast majority of information on subject choices (73%) and after-school activities (73%) came directly from secondary schools. In addition, almost three-quarters of students (74%) attended Open Days at local schools and over 40% visited schools on other. This picture was corroborated both by parents and teachers.

Formal sources of information

Interviews with pupils, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders provide a further source of

insight into the information available to support secondary school choice in Jersey. While our interviews suggested that formal information were important for pupils and parents, schools also appeared to overestimate the value of information from online resources:

They can go to our website; we'd like to think that there is plenty of information there to guide parents. [Private secondary school headteacher]

For secondary schools, a lot is advertised on websites and you can contact the Education Department. [Business person]

In contrast, some of the parents interviewed were critical regarding the lack of formal information regarding available on the internet, especially regarding school rankings and exam results:

If you search you will find it very difficult to find any results on the website, so you have to give them a call and they don't give you the results easily. The schools' websites [are] very poor quality. The Education Department should take more of an interest in the type of information that is available. [Parent of state secondary pupil]

Some school leaders also agreed:

The 'States' could be better at providing information to all families with children in Years 5 and 6 regarding all secondary schools. [School governor]

Once again, it therefore appears that internet resources were perceived as inadequate as a source of formal and objective information on secondary school choices.

As the survey responses suggested, schools themselves constituted an important source of information. Secondary schools generally hold open evenings in the autumn for prospective parents and pupils. Many primary schools also hold an 'end-of-Year 6' meeting, to explain the secondary system to parents and inform them

about the transition. One public primary headteacher explained the aim of these events:

We hope that parents feel in control when transferring to secondary school; that they know when [and] what is going to happen.

Interviews suggested that secondary schools tend to have an 'open-door' policy when it comes to families approaching them for information:

I got a letter saying I was coming to [named school] and before we came to school we also had a talk with Head of Year 7. [Year 7 student]

The interviews also suggested that these opportunities to visit schools were important as a first-hand source of information:

After [seeing] the reports that this school had, and the parent evenings that we attended, I didn't want to look anywhere else. [Mother of a pupil in state secondary school]

I thought I was fully informed. It was really good. Everything I heard about was really good. [Year 9 girl in state secondary school]

Despite the restrictions of the catchment system, schools were nevertheless seen to offer a valuable source of information on school choice and transitions for pupils and parents.

Formal sources of information were also important for pupil's curriculum and extra-curricular choices. The teachers interviewed described how this information was provided:

What we have been able to do reasonably well is to inform parents via our parents' evenings, and in those evenings we are beginning to have a half an hour seminar where a senior member of staff can talk to parents about the National Curriculum Levels and about curriculum options. [Private secondary school headteacher]

Most parents and pupils were positive when discussing the steps taken by schools to inform

them and their children of subject choices:

We had a meeting here and they gave us lots of information about their options and choices, which was brilliant; very informative. The guidance here was very good. [Mother of Year 9 student]

When we were given the booklet we got a lot of information about every subject in detail [Year 9 student]

In contrast, some parents had negative experiences of attempting to access information on subject choices from secondary schools:

I haven't met the teachers yet and even when you do meet them it's like five minutes and all the parents jump in, so it's a horrible experience. [Mother of a Year 9 student]

Overall, it appears that open evening and other opportunities to access subject information directly from schools is of considerable importance at secondary level.

Informal sources of information

Unsurprisingly, our interviews suggested that 'word of mouth' still constituted an important source of informal information on secondary school choices. Such informal exchanges of information were seen to be strongly embedded in the culture of Jersey:

In an island like Jersey there is word of mouth so an awful lot of information is passed from parent to parent. [Private secondary school headteacher]

In practice, this often involved the exchange of information amongst friends or neighbours, or between family members:

I wanted [state secondary school named] because one of my sister's children came here and she felt it was fantastic; and Jersey being quite small and good reports about [state secondary school]. [Mother of a Year 11 student in state secondary school]

The interviews also suggested that families who had recently migrated to Jersey often sought information on secondary schools from those with greater knowledge:

I think parents would listen to the opinion of relatives who have been here for longer; maybe from their bosses as well. A lot of the parents who arrive are new here. They don't know much about the schools so they get a lot of input from others. [State secondary school teaching assistant]

Informal sources of information from social networks appear to operate in parallel with, but as a welcome addition to, formal sources of information. The importance of word of mouth may be especially significant given the lack of league tables and the perceived poor quality of the information available online.

Quality of Information

Responses to the survey also provide an assessment of the perceived quality of information received by pupils and parents with regards to secondary school choices, curriculum choices, and extra-curricular activities. Pupils generally reported a moderately high level of satisfaction with the information received from secondary schools. The majority of pupils found that the information on school choice, subject choice and activates was clear. Equally, most answers also suggested that open days or school visits were popular and helpful. Few pupils responded that more information was required from schools on the topics of school selection, subject choice and available activities – although some suggested that more information would be welcomed. Parents generally provided similar responses to pupils when asked about the quality of information received from secondary schools and agreed that the information on school choice, subject choice and activities was clear. There was general agreement that more information would be desirable, although parents did not appear to feel particularly strongly in this regard.

Conclusion: Informing choice in education

Choice must be understood in the context of the constraints imposed by the catchment area system in Jersey (a for non-fee paying schools). However, this is not to say that access to information when making school choices was less important as a result. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that ‘formal’ information about schools was widely distributed to pupils and parents. This information was felt to be clear and of generally good quality and was valued by pupils and parents alike. For their part, schools recognised the need to communicate about the choices they offer.

Open days and other opportunities to visit schools in person appear to be particularly important for families and pupils. Again, this suggests that schools are doing well to provide prospective pupils and parents with insights and information. ‘Informal’ means of gaining access to information through face-to-face contact – whether with teachers, relatives, or other members of the community – were also perceived to be important. It appears that a considerable amount of information regarding schools in Jersey circulates via word-of-mouth, especially when it comes to questions of school’s performance or effectiveness. This is a feature of the culture of Jersey. However, the importance of word-of-mouth must be understood in context of the perceived inadequacies in the information available online and from other ‘formal’ sources (such as the Education Department). This then raises questions as to how people might access information on school’s performance without having access to word-of-mouth, for instance for new or prospective migrants who may not have established social networks in Jersey.

Lastly, it was clear from our research that information was also sought and obtained with regards to curriculum choices and opportunities for extra-curricular activities. Information

regarding subjects and activities appeared to be especially important for pupils and parents. On the whole, it appeared that schools were effective in distributing this information via ‘formal’ channels. However, more could perhaps be done to facilitate face-to-face communication and dialogue regarding secondary subject choices. Overall, information and communication were perceived to be a hugely valuable and important aspect of the school system in Jersey. However, the internet appeared to be a domain in which schools and government have a considerable way to go to meet people’s expectations

CHAPTER 3: OPPORTUNITY

Three different but related aspects of opportunity are examined here: The opportunity for pupils and their families to make decisions regarding schooling; the opportunity for pupils to exercise these decisions when choosing a school, selecting their preferred subjects (at secondary level), or taking part in extra-curricular activities; the opportunities which pupils are perceived to as a result of their education, for instance when trying to find a job or access further education.

Primary Schooling

Decision-making in primary education

Overall, primary pupils were happy with their ability to make decisions over schools and after-school activities. Pupils also reported that they felt well supported in making these decisions. Parents of children in primary school generally reported similar levels of satisfaction with the decision-making process to pupils. Parents also appeared far more willing to defer to their children's influence over decisions over after school activities (67%), when compared to decisions over school choice itself (28%). While parents felt they were strongly involved in decision-making, the majority (69%) also found it helpful to talk to other . However, the primary teachers surveyed had more negative perceptions of satisfaction with school decisions making. On the other hand, nearly all of the teacher surveyed (92%) felt that their pupils ultimately make good choices. Teachers considered parents to be most important person in helping pupils make decisions. Despite the fact that most pupils and parents cited teachers as a key source of information, teachers perceived their own influence as relatively insignificant.

Opportunity and primary school choice

Interviewees reflected on the opportunities available for primary pupils. One of the main

issues discussed was the catchment area system, which was felt to limit opportunities for choice:

Because the choices in Jersey are governed by catchment I don't think they see it as a choice, but we do encourage parents to discuss with their children why are they going to the school they go for. [Primary school headteacher]

I don't know how much choice the children have generally because they are expected to go to their catchment [schools]. I don't know how much questioning they do about that. [Primary school headteacher]

Ultimately, it appeared to be the case that the opportunities for choosing a primary school were contingent on a host of factors, including finances (for fee-paying schools):

I think parents have the ultimate say and this tends to be based on finances, catchment, where they went to school, current opinion of the schools and pressure [as a result of] where parents work. [Primary school teacher]

The catchment area system also poses some challenges in itself, especially for families with high levels of residential mobility (such as recent migrants):

Sometimes Portuguese families are very mobile in their addresses because of the accommodation issue in Jersey. So sometimes families move frequently and it's the residential address that makes the choice for catchment area school. [State primary school headteacher]

Despite the fact that the survey results suggested that pupils and parents were generally satisfied with the school decision-making process, it appears that these results must be viewed in context of the perceived constraints of the catchment area system, coupled with the differential opportunities between the public and fee-paying school systems.

Opportunity for extra-curricular activities in primary schools

It can be argued that the ability to choose from a range of extra-curricular activities is an important indicator of the opportunities children have for development and socialisation in primary school. We found that pupils themselves did not necessarily feel that they were exercising their own extra-curricular choices, due to the influence of their parents:

I had very little freedom for choosing extra-curriculum activities because it was my mum telling me to take those lessons. [Year 6 pupil]

This parental influence at primary level was not surprising the pupils generally discussed this in neutral:

With the swimming lessons I had no choice at all, but I found that I actually enjoyed them. [Year 6 pupil]

However, some pupils spoke directly about a lack of freedom over some activities choices:

With the extra-curriculum choices I had less freedom; like Portuguese, I hadn't any freedom. [Year 6 pupil]

It would, therefore, be inaccurate to consider activities as an area in which primary pupils necessarily have full freedom of choice.

After-school activities were held both within their schools and at private sessions outside. Schools seemed conscious of the financial burden imposed by some activities and had measures for additional in this regard:

Inevitably for the minority group their financial circumstances are more restricted so their parents will not always pay for private lesson. So we make sure we offer that opportunity; and if we organise a trip we make sure everyone can go even if they can't pay, so we privately talk to those families. [Primary school headteacher]

However, in addition to financial restrictions, there are the other more usual limitations on the after-school activities which primary schools can provide:

In the school setting, children have free choice, but there are some restrictions we have to put on group numbers or by ability. [Primary school headteacher]

Interviewees also explained that the willingness and availability of staff to run such activities – often voluntarily and in their own time – constituted a challenge for some primary schools:

If staff commitments allowed, there should be more after-school clubs, but pressure on teachers is very high and it would mean they had to give up some of their time to supervise an after-school club instead of being at their desks marking, preparing and planning. [Primary school teacher]

Extra-curricular activities should be provided by sport /arts coaches rather than teachers. If this were possible, the rather limited number of opportunities currently available [could] be extended. [Primary school teacher]

In an effort to overcome these issues, some schools were increasingly relying on people from the local community to run activities:

It's trying to get people from the community to give as many experiences as we can [Primary school headteacher]

There are, therefore, a number of constraints on the nature and availability of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, despite the best efforts of primary schools.

Secondary Schooling

Decision-making in secondary education

Secondary pupils referred to their parents as most important (81%) in their choice of school. Teachers were only reported to play an important role in the choice of subjects (34%), albeit still to

a lesser extent than parents (44%). Pupils also reported that talking to other people about choice of school (57%) and subjects (67%) was helpful. Parents felt that their own children were the most important influence the school decision-making process. Parents reported that subject choices were mainly influenced by teachers (51%), while after-school activities were mainly decided on by the children themselves (70%). The majority (65%) found that talking to others when they were choosing a school for their children was helpful, but this happened less (48%) when choosing subjects. Secondary teachers echoed pupils and parents, although a lower proportion felt that 'formal' sources of information from teachers (15%) and government agencies (17%) were important. This changed significantly for subject choice, where teachers saw themselves as the most important source of information (76%). This contrasted with the view of pupils, who saw parents as a greater influence than teachers. This pattern was reversed for after-school activities, where teachers felt that parents were the main source of information (64%). Teachers also thought it was important for pupils to talk to other students before choosing their school (84%) and their subjects (77%).

Pupils were asked how satisfied they were with the decision-making processes for secondary school. On the whole, pupils reported being satisfied with the process of choosing a secondary school, subjects, and after-school activities. During the decision-making process they felt relatively well-supported by their primary schools, albeit to a lesser extent than by their future secondary schools. Importantly, pupils felt in control when making decisions. Overall, parents were also satisfied with the school choice process. They believed that their children were firmly in control of the process but also reported feeling adequately involved themselves. Teachers perceived there to be a moderate level of satisfaction with the decision-making process and felt that levels of satisfaction

with school choice were lower than that actually reported by pupils and parents. However, teachers believe that pupils make good choices about their schools (85%), subject choices (81%), and activities (98%). Furthermore, teachers felt that pupils are reasonably well-supported in their decision-making by schools.

Opportunity and secondary school choice

The catchment area system was seen to constrain the choice between non-paying schools, while academic and financial constraints influenced decisions regarding fee-paying alternatives:

Jersey is a highly selective system. Obviously some parents would choose their children to go to the fee-paying sector so there is selection all along the line in Jersey. [State secondary school headteacher]

However, most of the pupils interviewed appeared to have pragmatic views towards their choice of secondary school:

I am going to [state secondary school named] and I visited the school and I know a lot of people and family who go there. It's also the closest. [Year 6 pupil]

Pupils did not frequently reflect on the limitations of the catchment area system in this regard, although some appeared more aware of the opportunities to choose between fee-paying and non-fee paying schools. However, many pupils were agnostic towards this choice:

I don't really think there is much of a difference. I've looked at one that is [private] and one that is not and there is not much of a difference. The only difference is that private schools just have girls or just have boys, and the public schools are mixed. [Year 6 pupil]

Some pupils did appear to perceive a difference in quality between private and state schools:

It was always going to be [state secondary school named] because since the idea of

secondary school came we don't have the money to pay for a private school. We couldn't afford it. I know that private schools are better than public schools, but I think that I will learn well in [state secondary school named]. [Year 6 boy]

Some pupils expressed stronger views against the prospect of private secondary education:

I don't really think it's too different because they teach the same things, but private you have to pay and they are not mixed, so it doesn't feel as comfortable. [Year 6 pupil]

As one would expect, secondary school choices elicited a wide range of responses, largely reflecting individual and family circumstances, rather than any widely-held preferences towards either non-catchment or fee-paying schools.

However, neutral perceptions of the decision-making process for secondary schools were not as widely shared amongst parents, many of whom complained about the catchment system:

I think there should be definitely more choice, it shouldn't be down to the catchment area, I think they should listen to the parents, not just expect that they have to go to their catchment school. [Mother of a Year 11 student]

The parents we interviewed appeared to feel less strongly regarding opportunities to access fee-paying schools, with some arguing against private education on the grounds of diversity, or equality of opportunity:

I could have sent my children to private education, but not only the cost comes into it but I don't really think that it's so much benefit because the children have all the opportunities here [at state school]. [Mother of a Year 7 student]

We did look into private schooling, but I decided against it. It would be good for them socially to learn to get along with other types of people. [Mother of Year 8 and 9 pupils]

Overall, interviews with pupils and parents did not feel that their opportunities were hindered in terms of access to Jersey's fee paying schools.

For their part, those representatives of fee-paying schools that we interviewed defended the equality of opportunity offered by private schools:

We have a good budget available for bursaries and we provide bursaries when we can. I have never said 'no' to someone who meets the criteria and is not financially able to come here.. [Private school headteacher]

Nevertheless, one state secondary school teacher suggested that these opportunities need to be more widely communicated:

I think that bursaries should be more publicised and allow more students the opportunity to access selective schools.

Similarly, with regards to academic selection, representatives of private schools argued that they offered a reasonable level of equal access for prospective pupils:

Our selection is based on a minimum on 100 CATs score and 100 is the national average. If you were a selective school in the UK you would be probably looking at 120+. We are not highly selective academically. [Private school headteacher]

These insights suggest that the fee paying sector in Jersey is satisfied with the equality of opportunity it offers. However, this was not always reflected in the opinions of pupils:

The private schools are quite unfair [because] they have a test to join. Some people would like to go to a private school, but they know they wouldn't be able to do well [in] a test. [Year 7 boy in state secondary school]

The constraints on access to fee-paying schools therefore constitute a somewhat contentious issue, whether in terms of the equality of bursary schemes, or the role of academic selection.

Other interviewees also argued that the pressure placed on pupils to achieve the academic standards necessary to access certain secondary schools, in particular Hautlieu, risked having a detrimental effect:

I've got a student at the moment who is actually making himself physically sick with the decision of having to go and the pressure he is feeling that he is going to disappoint his parents if he decides to stay here. [Secondary school teacher]

This suggests that the opportunity for students to attend a selective school (based on academic achievement) could be experienced as a source of stress and anxiety for some pupils. The point here is not to criticise the policies of selective school(s) themselves, but rather to acknowledge that the pressure to achieve these criteria does raise issues for pupils at a particularly critical and sensitive stage in their development.

A final set of comments from parents concerned the appeals process, which can allow families to make a special case for their children to attend a non-catchment school. This process was perceived to be more complicated than for primary schools:

My other daughter didn't get into this school. I had to appeal because I had two other children in this school already, and she was bullied in her other school so eventually I got her in here, but it was quite difficult. [Mother of a Year 11 student]

In contrast, one primary head suggested that the process was relatively straightforward:

Parents don't have to do an awful lot; they have to fill in the paperwork to say that they either accept the place or not and want to appeal.

Overall, the interviews did not provide sufficient detail for a fuller assessment of the appeals process. However, it would appear that this

process is not as clear and transparent as would be necessary to ensure equality of choice and opportunity within the catchment system.

Opportunities within the secondary curriculum

Our interviews also explored the opportunities which secondary pupils had to make decisions over subject/curriculum choices. Schools felt that they offered a good variety of options:

Off the top of my head, they have something like 25 subjects to choose from and they can choose three. [State secondary school headteacher]

We have one of the widest ranges of academic choices on the island for GCSE and BTECs, and the curriculum is broad and balanced. [State secondary school teacher]

Many students also described having freedom to make their desired subject choices:

Because you've been in school for two years, you know what you want to do. And I said to my parents what I wanted to do and they accepted that, so when it came to choosing subjects it was kind of simple. [Year 9 pupil in private secondary school]

However, pupils in private secondary schools felt more pressure – especially from parents – when choosing subjects:

I had freedom from my teachers, but I didn't have that much freedom from my parents 'cause they wanted me to do subjects that are better for the future. [Year 9 pupil in private secondary school]

A comment from one mother of a pupil in a private school helped to elucidate the reasons for favouring certain subjects over others:

There are some courses that for the amount of money I am going to pay ... like Medicine or Law. If you do something like History of Art, it is not so clear at the end where you are actually going to build your career.

Broadly speaking, these quotes suggest a relatively predictable balance of pressures (and freedoms) from parents when it came to secondary pupils making subject choices.

In turn, some pupils felt more strongly that they experienced undue pressure from their school or teachers to choose certain subjects. As one pupil explained:

The teachers try to bias us to do their subjects. They try to make it sound better than it really is. They say stuff, but if you ask some of the students they tell you different. So it's hard to choose. [Year 9 pupil in state secondary school]

This was also echoed by some pupils in private secondary schools:

The thing about this school is that it thinks a lot about its results so it is really like: "you should really choose this subject". I think that in some ways that is wrong.

From the teacher's point of view, however, it was normal to exert some influence over subject choice for the sake of pupil's attainment and well-being:

[Students] mostly have the freedom, but teachers have input because they know the students and they'd tell the student the situation if they would struggle. [Teaching assistant in state secondary school]

Once again, therefore, it cannot be argued that these aspects of pupil's experiences of secondary education are a particular cause for concern, or that they are unique to Jersey.

We also found a number of restrictions in place when choosing optional subjects at secondary level. Subjects are often organised into timetabled 'blocks', in such a way that they inhibit certain combinations of choices. Some schools canvass their pupils' preferred subject choices in advance, so that these blocks can be

arranged to accommodate as many preferences as possible. From the teacher's perspective, this system worked well:

Generally we try to support the wishes of a student who wants to do a particular range of subjects. [State secondary school headteacher]

However, this view was not supported by many of the pupils interviewed (at the same school):

There were some subjects I couldn't pick. [Year 9 student]

I was annoyed because I wanted to do Spanish and History, and they were in the same block [so] I had to pick one. [Year 9 student]

Moreover, some state school pupils perceived there to be inequalities in how the block system was administered, either within or between schools:

The blocks aren't really even because they are not really mixed. It's the best [subjects] in one block and the worst ones in another block. [Year 9 pupil]

The blocks are terrible here. Other schools have different blocks. I think it should be the Education Department to choose the blocks equally for all schools. [Year 9 pupil]

One pupil even felt that restrictions in subject choices were a source of disadvantage in accessing further education or employment:

We have three options and I would like to have four because if you have four you have a wider range of different jobs to choose from. Because I didn't have History it will be a disadvantage to doing Law. [Year 9 student]

Given the number of comments received and the strength of feeling on this issue, the system of creating 'blocks' for subject options appeared to be perceived as a widespread source of frustration and even inequality on the part of many secondary pupils.

Opportunities for extra-curricular activities in secondary schools

Our interviews also explored the opportunities which secondary pupils had to undertake extra-curricular activities. We found a broader choice of activities than in primary schools:

They have a lot at this school; an awful lot. There is sport, drama, music. We have a very good Combined Cadet Force. I think it's fair to say that this school has more activities than any other school on the island. [Private secondary headteacher]

There are a lot of things going on. We've got music, drama, revision classes, chess club, lots of sporting activities and the dedicated Portuguese lessons. [State secondary headteacher]

This was echoed by many of the parents we interviewed:

[The pupils] couldn't choose anything more. They get opportunities every lunch hour for things they can do and after-school, as well as the sports. They couldn't squeeze anymore in. [Mother of a Year 7 student in a state secondary school]

Pupils were generally keen to take advantage of extra-curricular activities and seem satisfied with the choices available, which were felt to have a positive impact on their school life:

I think it's often good to do a few [activities] because in that way you are not stuck at home and you can be with your friends after school having fun. [State secondary pupil]

I thought it would be good idea because I really enjoy exercise and also it's a good way to meet new friends from other schools. [State secondary pupil]

Due to the wide range of after-school activities on offer, pupils who chose to take advantage of these reported being 'very busy most days of the week'.

However, issues were raised in relation to the equality of opportunities to take advantage of some of the activities offered, especially in state secondary schools. Firstly, some pupils pointed to gender disparities in the sports available:

There should be more activities for girls to do; for example, for girls there is only netball. [Year 7 girl in state secondary school]

A second issue related to the limited time frame for certain activities (although this was often due to the seasonal nature of some sports:

You don't really get much time to do each sport. You get a couple of months and that's it. It's not much and it's a bit boring. [Year 9 boy in state secondary school]

A third, but less common, complaint related to the quality of instruction in some activities:

In music lessons, we are doing the same thing over and over again, and we start playing games because it's boring. [Year 7 boy in state secondary school]

These issues were not particularly widespread, although they do point to potential areas for development and improvement in the extra-curricular opportunities afforded to pupils.

Outcomes and Life Chances

This section considers the broader question of the perceived opportunities provided by schooling in Jersey, in terms of educational outcomes and life chances.

Academic attainment

The majority of interviewees felt there to be little variation in the quality of education between schools. However, it was suggested that the 'sorting' of more academically-able students into fee-paying schools created an unfair impression of lower attainment within state schools:

What we've been pushing for is to look more at the value that we add to the student, so if

the student comes with a target grade E and they achieve a C, they are making value of two grades and that's what we view at the school as success. But not every school views that obviously. [State secondary school teaching assistant]

The question of whether 'value added' was adequately reflected in school's perceived academic performance was also reflected on by both parents and pupils:

Public schools don't have high grades, but we can't blame the school as most of the high-grade people leave for Hautlieu, and then the people staying behind have lower grades, which doesn't look good but is not the school's fault. [Year 9 pupil]

The question of whether variations between school's academic results constitute an adequate measure of the quality of education appeared to be a particular issue of contention for state schools, in which academic attainment was perceived to partly reflect the sorting of some pupils into selective schools.

Reputation and stigma

Most interviewees, including pupils, were quick to defend the quality of state schools:

Here you get exactly the same education as private schools. [Year 7 girl in state secondary school]

However, the research revealed that negative perceptions of some schools were relatively widespread and constituted a source of reputational stigma for the state school sector:

If you go to a private school you are better off. But it's more [about] the public opinion than the actual difference. [Year 9 girl in state secondary school]

This was also reflected by some pupils in private schools:

Some of the people who go to the free schools

are not really bothered about school. [Year 9 boy in private secondary school]

Needless to say, this issue was a source of frustration for those state school pupils who felt it unfairly presented their school in a bad light:

People in private schools think they are better than us. They say we've got a bad reputation. It's kind of mean because they haven't been to our school. They haven't experienced what it's like here. [Year 7 girl in state secondary school]

The research found evidence from both within and outside of non-fee paying schools which indicated that the state school sector was perceived to suffer from negative stigma. This was especially worrying as this stigma was widely felt and discussed by pupils themselves.

Our interviews also revealed more about the factors which appeared to influence the poor reputation of some state secondary schools. Firstly, pupils in fee-paying schools were seen as more 'invested' in their education due to the financial commitment involved:

In a public school, they don't seem to be as bothered about their education, whereas here most people work for the money they are paying. [Year 9 pupil in private secondary school]

Secondly, those in state schools suggested that fee-paying schools were better resourced:

I think there is quite a bit of difference. In private schools students seem to get a better education because they have more money and supply students with equipment and more teachers. [Year 9 girl in state secondary school]

Thirdly, perceptions of behaviour and classroom management were also widely discussed:

State schools seem to have a worst reputation; like there [are] more pupils who mess around

than actually work. [Year 9 girl in state secondary school]

Schools' reputations therefore appear to reflect a range factors, largely based on assumptions regarding the differences between fee paying and non-fee paying schools. Some of these factors are external to the schools themselves (such as the financial investment of parents), while others are down to perceived effectiveness in managing pupils' behaviour and learning. This apparent reputational stigma constitutes a source for concern, especially within a relatively small system and one in which choice is limited.

Employment Opportunities

A final issue discussed by our interviewees related to the perceived employment prospects of school leavers within Jersey's labour market. Some respondents indicated that employers were particularly sensitive towards which schools prospective employees had attended:

To get a job it is important where you went to school. I find it ridiculous, but that's the way things work around here. [Businessperson]

It was even suggested that this reflects the reputational stigma attached to certain schools:

Local employers may choose a student on the knowledge that they have been to particular schools. In Jersey there is a huge stigma attached to the school one attended. [School governor]

Within the confines of the catchment area system, this raises concerns regarding the longer term equality of opportunities available to pupils on the basis of their allocation to particular schools.

A number of respondents – especially stakeholders from business and industry – offered more practical reflections on the role of relationships between schools and employers in this regard:

We have a strong network of, and

partnerships with, employers - a whole range of careers - that could involve career mentoring, internships, work placements, CV and application workshops. [Private secondary school headteacher]

However, one employer suggested that non-fee paying schools were less effective at establishing links with local businesses:

We have very close links with the private schools. The public schools, they know about us, but they don't seem to be so involved in directing their students to other options. [Businessperson]

Employers suggested that there was scope for secondary schools, especially in the state sector, to work more closely with businesses to equip school leavers for the labour market:

I think there should be more integration between employer and schools that would be beneficial for both parties. There should be some assessment from the school about what an employer wants. [Businessperson]

Schools themselves may therefore have a greater role to play in fostering links with employers.

In contrast, some interviewees suggested that opportunities for employment and higher education simply reflected the academic attainment of pupils from fee-paying and selective schools:

The fee-paying schools and Hautlieu are selective academically and therefore are more likely to have students go on to university, which will have an effect on their employment prospects. This does not mean that students in non-fee paying schools or those attending [state school named] have worse job prospects. [School governor]

However, some representatives of local businesses saw variations in pupils' abilities in starker terms:

The achievement levels aren't really there from what I've seen from some of the students that are coming out [of state secondary schools]. They can't spell correctly, write or coordinate sentences at 15 and 16 years old. [Businessperson]

This was even echoed by some pupils, who felt that academic achievement, job prospects, and the nature of education within state schools were interlinked:

Most people who leave private school leave with A's or A's and they can be really successful. In the public schools, they are less strict and people can leave with really bad grades and they can't get jobs.* [Year 9 student in state secondary school]

While the findings presented in the following chapter suggest that pupils generally had high levels of aspiration for the future, these insights into the attitudes and perceptions of employers in Jersey create cause for concern, especially in terms of the employment prospects of leavers from state schools.

Lastly, some respondents also raised concerns regarding the provision of vocational training within secondary education in Jersey:

[Vocational] skills aren't at the top of everybody's agenda. I employ hundreds of staff, most of them with very limited education, but we gave them the opportunity to improve their skills. When you recognise that at 13 or 14 a child is not going to go the academic route, it is better to give them a more practical education and technical skills. [Businessperson]

Some school leaders also felt that the choice between A-Levels and vocational training was too stark:

When students leave us from Year 11 because they got the option of either doing the traditional academic A-Levels or vocational

in Highlands, and there is no mixture of A-Levels with vocational courses, and I think that's wrong. [State secondary school headteacher]

It therefore appears that schools and employers may benefit from working together to ensure that school leavers have the opportunities to equip themselves with the appropriate range of skills for the local job market.

Conclusion: Opportunities for pupils within Jersey's school system

Pupils and parents generally felt satisfied with the opportunities available to them to make choices over schools, subjects, and extra-curricular activities, both at primary and secondary level. Despite the generally positive survey responses, however, our interviews revealed that parents did feel constrained in their opportunity to choose between non-fee paying schools as a result the catchment area system. The process of appealing against the allocation of catchment secondary schools was also seen as difficult to navigate. In contrast, pupils rarely expressed such strong feelings over school choice (at secondary level). Our interviews gave the impression that few pupils would prefer to attend an alternative fee-paying or non-catchment school.

Subject choice was a more contentious issue for pupils, with some reporting that they experienced an unwelcome amount of pressure from teachers when making subject choices and many more complaining that the timetabling of optional subjects meant that they could not take all of their preferred choices. This stood out as a possible source for concern within the state secondary sector. More positively, the breadth of activities in (state) secondary schools was widely praised by pupils and parents alike, with only a small number of concerns raised regarding the equal provision of activities for girls.

Lastly, the chapter also considered the broader question of how Jersey's schools were perceived

– by pupils, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders (such as members of the business community) – in terms of the opportunities they offered for educational outcomes. While this section was not based on measures of outcomes or life-chances (as these are beyond the scope of the research), in nonetheless shed light on how these issues were perceived by the people we interviewed. The vast majority of state school pupils and parents defended the quality of non-fee paying education in Jersey, suggesting that it offered equivalent educational opportunities to private schooling.

More worryingly, a reputational stigma appeared to be attached to (some) state secondary schools. It was generally acknowledged that state secondary schools attract a less favourable reputation than fee-paying schools as a result. This was generally believed to stem from perceived problems with behaviour and levels of academic achievement. However pupils, parents and teachers reflecting on this as that this as an unfair representation of the realities of state education (especially in the context of a selective system for fee-paying schools). Perhaps most worryingly, some interviewees (including representatives of employers in Jersey) also perceived state school pupils to have fewer opportunities within the labour market, both because of stigma, and also because private schools had more established links with employers. These insights constitute a cause for concern in terms of the opportunities which pupils may or may not enjoy later on in life.

CHAPTER 4: WELL-BEING

This chapter explores the perceived well-being of pupils within Jersey's primary and secondary schools. Two particular aspects of well-being are considered: Firstly, pupils' attitudes towards their schools, their learning, and their aspirations towards the future. Secondly, the well-being of particular groups is also considered, with respect to pupils with special education needs (SEN) and pupils/parents for whom English is as an additional language (EAL).

Satisfaction

Primary education

The results discussed in the previous two chapters suggest that pupils and their parents felt satisfied with the choices and opportunities provided by primary schools. More broadly, it appeared that parents and pupils were generally happy with the education received:

*The school here has been absolutely first class in terms of assistance with his weak areas.
[Parent on Year 6 boy]*

*I am happy because they give me lots of education and teach me how to do sports.
[Year 6 pupil]*

Pupils were particularly keen to reflect on the extra-curricular activities which they were involved in when discussing their feelings towards primary school:

I think because I am a scout I think that I am able to do a lot of things that a lot of people of my age wouldn't be able to do. [Year 6 pupil]

Primary school pupils therefore appeared to derive particular satisfaction from these range of opportunities offered by their schools.

Transition to secondary school

The transition between primary and secondary school can be a particular source of stress and

anxiety. Some of the pupils interviewed discussed these concerns:

I was happy to be here, but I didn't know anyone, so it was a bit worrying. [Year 9 student]

I was excited to come to a new school. I was also a bit worried, but then got used to it. [Year 9 student]

A small number of pupils also held concerns that bullying was a problem in secondary schools:

I am kind of worried about the bullies. When I was a bit younger, there were lots of rumours that there were lots of bullies in the public school. [Year 6 pupil]

Some pupils discussed their anxieties over the transition to fee-paying schools, especially given the fact that private schools are single-sex:

I think it also affects relationships like having a boyfriend or a girlfriend if you go to a private school. [Year 6 pupil]

This range of quotes therefore reveals how students have complex and diverse concerns regarding the transition between primary and secondary school.

Most schools have transition programmes in place. Secondary schools host visits for pupils from catchment primary schools and at least one secondary school offers a summer school to help children settle in. Some schools have also moved to a more familiar primary-type model for Year 7. These steps appear to help with transition:

We don't have to mix with older kids and it's more interesting than primary school; we learn a lot more. [Year 7 secondary student]

However, the transition to secondary also imposes practical challenges on families:

In primary, parents are bringing the children to school and taking them at the end of the day, whereas in secondary they can take the

bus. So I think it's a little bit tricky at secondary school. [Primary headteacher]

Efforts to help pupils and parents with these transitions therefore appear as welcome, given the potential challenges and anxieties involved in moving to secondary school.

The transition to Hautlieu (at age 14) potentially poses particular challenges for pupils who have already settled into their secondary school:

In Year 9 he was selected for opportunity to go to Hautlieu, but he made the choice to stay in [state secondary school named] because he was settled [and] everything was going well. He didn't like the prospect of ten new teachers in a new school, so we supported him with his decision. [Father of students in Year 8 and Year 11 public secondary school]

In other cases, pupils who were not going to Hautlieu were concerned that a proportion of their friendship group would leave after Year 9:

I was offered a place in Hautlieu, but I decided to stay here for the better GCSE options. All my friends have gone to Hautlieu. I am going to miss my friends, but I know it's the right choice for my future. [Year 9 girl in a public secondary school]

The intake into Hautlieu at age 14 therefore constitutes a unique aspect of pupils' concerns towards school transitions. On the whole, however, it appears that schools in Jersey do well to manage these transitions.

Secondary education

The majority of parents and pupils appeared to be satisfied with the opportunities offered both by secondary schools:

It's a fantastic arrangement. It's a very inclusive school. Everybody has the opportunity to do everything both academically and there is every sport you can think of. We couldn't ask for anything more.

[Father of Year 8 and Year 11 students in a state secondary school]

More specifically, others discussed satisfaction in terms of the balance between extra-curricular and academic opportunities and the level of support offered in this regard:

There are quite a lot of opportunities for sports and there are also mentoring sessions to help you with English, Maths, Science and all that. [Year 9 boy in state secondary school]

These positive accounts were typical of a large number of responses.

However, some interviewees expressed concerns regarding particular issues in their schools. One recurring issue for pupils' and parents' satisfaction concerned the perception that schools were not sufficiently 'pushing' pupils to improve:

I think they should try to push the children maybe because that's how it is back home where all subjects are compulsory. When he had to choose subjects here it was quite difficult. There were subjects like cooking, and my son is not interested in that. [Parent of a Year 11 boy, originally from outside the UK]

They could also try to push you a bit more; tell us how we can improve behaviour and tell us the goals we need to achieve. [Year 9 girl in state secondary school]

A minority of pupils also discussed problems of poor behaviour and disruptions in class:

If you work hard you achieve a goal, but say, for example, a class and someone distracts [you]. They are disrupting your education and it's annoying. [Student in state secondary school]

A small number of interviewees also reflected on issues relating to bullying, these generally concerned specific manifestations of bullying:

When we are at the canteen sometimes people squish you in the middle and they call you

names and you can't answer back. The older kids bully us during lunch break and there is no respect for the teachers. [Year 7 girl in state secondary school]

The interviews did not reveal systematic issues of bullying, although this was not specifically addressed data as part of this research.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Inclusion of SEN pupils within primary education

Typically, primary school pupils with special educational needs (SEN) attend their local catchment schools, which in turn have access to support and resources provided by the Department of Education. While some of these schools are reputed to have greater expertise than others in supporting SEN pupils, the impression gained was that most children are accommodated well within 'mainstream' education. As one headteacher explained:

Most children with SEN, if they were born in Jersey, are known to all the various agencies that help families from birth and because all the schools are given a budget, if a SEN child comes to the catchment primary school, that school will have the facilities to support those children. [Primary school headteacher]

As a result, parents should not need to alter their primary school choices to reflect pupil's SENs:

Anybody reading our website would see we are an all-inclusive school. We don't give specific information such as 'if your child has this, then you can access that' because I don't think that making that public is the right thing to do because it is an individual's needs. It's only when they come in that we can have a conversation. [Primary school headteacher]

In the eyes of school leaders, at least, primary schools were well-adapted towards the inclusion of children with SEN, as a result of the support available from the Education Department.

From our interviews, we also gained the impression that parents of SEN pupils were satisfied with the provisions put in place within their catchment or public schools:

I talked to the teacher and he was very nice and said he would keep an eye and that he saw my son was a happy child in the classroom. [Mother of a SEN Year 6 boy]

My children get a lot of support. They have a severe medical condition and they are allowed to arrive at school later and are given the required medication by school staff. [Mother of SEN children in Years 2 and 7]

School leaders also suggested that feedback from parents was positive:

Feedback from parents is good. For the children who are in our resource provision for autism, they are making their decisions based on what parents and professionals agree [is] best for them. [Primary school headteacher]

The interviews did not give the impression of any systemic failings in the provision of learning support for SEN primary pupils, whether encountered by teachers, parents or pupils themselves.

However, our interviews did suggest that some challenges remained in terms of meeting the needs of SEN pupils in Jersey. For instance, one issue concerned whether and how such needs were identified:

I said it looks a bit like dyslexia, but they dismissed that, saying that it was more of an attitude problem, saying he was just badly behaved. I mentioned again to the teacher that he might have dyslexia and she told me that if he had dyslexia she wouldn't know what to do. [Mother of a Year 3 pupil]

This issue appeared as a source of some contention. On the one hand, some school leaders felt that the system relied on parents to inform

schools of their child's special needs:

We have a very robust process, but it depends on the parent providing us with the information, and we do get some instances with parents who for whatever reason withhold information. [Education policy maker]

On the other hand, others felt that it was the responsibility of the school

If the child has SEN, it is us that identify it. So more often than not, it is the school that instigates everything. [Primary school headteacher]

In some instances, parents made the decision to seek alternatives for SEN children outside of the state primary school system:

The educational psychologist said that there are two private schools on the island that have small classes and have special needs teachers who are very experienced. So they were recommended to us. [Mother of SEN pupil in private primary]

It is not surprising that experiences of and responses to SEN education vary between families. Overall, however, our interviews did not reveal any systematic issues in SEN support within Jersey's primary schools.

Inclusion of SEN pupils within secondary education

Parents and teachers also discussed their experiences of how SEN pupils were supported within Jersey's secondary schools. On the whole, attitudes towards SEN support within state secondary schools were also positive:

My son is in smaller groups, and the lessons are differentiated for that level. There is a key worker in there as well, not necessarily for him, but they also have TA's as well to support. I'd say his needs are met. [Mother of SEN pupil in a state secondary school]

This view was also re-iterated by those involved in teaching secondary pupils. However, the interviews also suggested that fee-paying schools did not provide equivalent levels of SEN support:

I don't know what [private schools] are supporting, but I'd imagine it's more high-functioning children. I've seen a lot of students who have siblings who are in private schools and those who are 'more needy' have come to state schools. [Mother of a Year 9 pupil in state secondary]

Some interviewees even felt that selective private schools would not accept SEN pupils:

There is a big difference between the private sector and state schools. The private sector would not take people in with special educational needs. [Father of a Year 7 SEN student in a state secondary school]

This was reiterated – albeit in less strong terms – by some of the teachers interviewed from the private sector, although it was argued that provisions for SEN support were improving:

We didn't have the support. There is no doubt in my mind that we had SEN children for a while, but we hadn't really had a proper support programme in place. We are really only beginning to build up support networks for children with SEN. The SEN department will begin to take-off in the next two years. I think that at the moment there is a feeling that we don't offer much learning support [and] parents are beginning to understand that the school needs to provide for pupils with SEN. [Private school headteacher]

While the perceived lack of support in fee-paying schools constitutes a cause for concern, it is encouraging that schools appeared aware of the need to improve in this regard and measures to accommodate SEN pupils were being put in place.

It was also found that some parents of SEN children did not have a positive view in relation

to their children's transition to secondary school. As a mother of a child with learning disabilities explained:

My son wants to be with three specific pupils when he moves. These are the things I would think they would come to me and say: "What shall we do; let's do this". I'm at the end of this term and still waiting to find out what they are going to do. [Mother of a Year 6 SEN pupil]

Another parent warned that a lack of available information constituted a potential problem for those less forthcoming in asking for support:

I often find that as a parent you need to find out things for yourself. It would be really lovely if someone came and said 'this is what you need to do' and as a parent with a child with special needs. But nobody tells you that you will be entitled to these things that you are entitled to. I have no hesitation in picking up the phone if I've got a query, but I know that not everybody has that ability. [Father of a Year 7 SEN student]

These comments broadly echo the view from primary schools that the onus is often placed on parents to inform schools and request that support be put in place for SEN pupils. More broadly, however, SEN provisions within Jersey's secondary schools were perceived positively, especially in terms of the additional staffing available. The parents we interviewed appeared to value the fact that the needs of SEN children were accommodated within state schools.

Pupils for whom English is spoken as an Additional Language (EAL)

Inclusion of EAL pupils within primary education

With an average of between 600 and 1,000 new migrants arriving in Jersey annually over the past decade – and with nearly 20 per cent of Jersey's population now born in countries in which

English is not the main language – schools must cater for an increasing number of pupils who are not native speakers of English. School leaders and teachers generally argued that primary schools did their best to ensure support and inclusion for their EAL pupils:

I think all schools have the same facilities and opportunities for children with EAL. We all have access to the speech and language group, which is based at [state primary school named], but we can ring up and say we have a child here we need help with... Every school has equal opportunities. [Primary school headteacher]

However, school staff also acknowledged that they faced challenges in providing support for EAL pupils, with a translated materials or multi-lingual staff constituting a main barrier:

I think the [thing] that could be stronger is the issue with the additional language; there could be perhaps more information with that. I think written communication is the biggest challenge; I don't have Portuguese- or Polish-speaking staff. [Primary headteacher]

In one teacher's view, other EAL pupils sometimes had to step in to support their peers:

*There are [many] children here with different language needs and there is no support, other than other children from the same place.
[Primary teaching assistant]*

It was therefore very apparent that primary schools were aware of the challenges posed by educating EAL pupils and have measures of support in place. However, given the range of potential language needs, schools still struggled to accommodate all EAL pupils.

Despite these challenges, parents of EAL pupils generally reported that schools were doing a good job in supporting their children's learning needs:

The school here has been absolutely first class in terms of assistance with his weak areas. He

was aware of some of the problems and he had the opportunity to discuss the situation with other children who were already there and to a degree he did participate but he was pointed in the right direction. [Parent of EAL Year 6 pupil]

Interviews with EAL families did not, therefore, appear to suggest that their children's linguistic needs constituted a major hindrance in their primary schooling, due to the support offered by schools. More broadly, the level of diversity within primary schools was seen as an important factor in school choice for some EAL families:

I knew there was a variety of [ethnic] backgrounds and I thought it would be good for him. [Parent of a Year 6 pupil]

The catchment area system has the potential to hinder parents' ability to choose a school based on its ethnic diversity. However, parents are able to make an appeal for their children to attend non-catchment schools and it appeared that the needs of migrants were recognised in this process:

Before coming back from [Portugal] I contacted the Education Department. My son wanted to return to the same school. The person in charge assured me that my son's wishes would be at the forefront of the decision, and as soon as I came back they said fine'. [Mother of EAL Year 6 pupil]

Therefore, while there was no clear evidence that EAL pupils were disadvantaged within the school system, it does appear that there are challenges faced both by schools (in terms of resources and expertise) and by parents (in terms of choice) when it comes to meeting the needs of children for whom English is not their first language.

Inclusion within secondary education

In contrast to primary education, our interviewees gave the impression that the inclusion of EAL pupils posed a greater challenge within secondary schools. On the one hand, schools themselves

were perceived as doing well to provide resources for EAL pupils and parents:

On induction day, if you are from a different background, the EAL teacher will be here. We have interpreters on site, [so] there is no reason why there is left anything unexplained. They will get letters in both English and Portuguese or Polish. [Father of Year 8 and Year 11 students in a state secondary]

Schools also appeared to be taking further steps to include non-native English speakers:

We want to introduce a 'welcome pack' in Portuguese, and maybe in Polish, with specific information about how the school works because the system is different from where they come from. [Teaching assistant in a state secondary school]

However, the fact that many EAL pupils entering secondary school are at a later stage in their education creates a greater need for support:

I'd like to have more dedicated support, particularly for youngsters who arrived on island who don't have English at all, and that makes it very difficult to access the curriculum. We are not able to put in as much support as we'd like because the EAL team in Jersey is very small and spread across secondary and primary. [State secondary school headteacher]

The pressures of accommodating a range of EAL pupils within secondary schools therefore appears to be creating the need for additional support within Jersey's education system.

A second but related issue to have emerged from our interviews the fact that parents of EAL children sometimes struggled to provide support with homework:

My parents can't help me because they are not English so they don't know [the language or the system. [Year 9 EAL pupil student in state secondary school]

If you need help with English, it's quite hard if your parents don't know English. [Year 7 EAL pupil student in state secondary school]

A similar issue was discussed in terms of parents' ability to engage with their children's schools:

If they don't speak English like my parents, if there is a letter home and they don't really know you have to explain everything. [Year 9 student in state secondary school]

While schools described the use of translation to support EAL families, this does not cover all forms of communication between schools and parents, as one headteacher explained:

Not everything that gets out of the school is translated into other languages, which is unfortunate really.

These insights suggest that there is scope to provide greater support for EAL parents, both when communicating with schools and also with a view towards ensuring more equal levels of access to help with homework for EAL pupils.

Lastly, several respondents expressed concerns over the impact of negative or discriminatory attitudes towards inclusion within Jersey – regardless of the work being done in schools to ensure the inclusion of EAL pupils – as these comments from headteachers suggest:

Our minority children feel proud of the Jersey community and they are very proud of their home community, but sometimes there are [feelings] of 'not feeling an accepted part of the Jersey community'.

To get inclusion going is quite a battle. Not all parents have an inclusive attitude and I'd say it's probably taken around five years to get the whole community to understand so that parents are accepting of all the differences in our school.

It is therefore important to remember questions of inclusion for EAL pupils and children from

different backgrounds cannot be considered outside of the context of the wider communities in which schools operate.

The Future

Assessments of the future

The final section of this chapter considers pupils', parents' and teachers' perceptions of the future for Jersey's primary and secondary school pupils.

Generally, primary students felt that they were in control of their futures and found it easy to access advice and guidance on their future education (74%). However, students also felt that they faced a number of constraints, including finding a quiet place to study and staying motivated.

Around a quarter of pupils believed that their ideas for the future conflicted with those of their parents. Only a small proportion of primary parents reported that there were obstacles in the way of their children achieving their hopes and ambitions, such as low motivation or not understanding the opportunities which school can offer. Primary teachers held slightly more negative attitudes towards pupils' futures. More than three quarters felt that support from parents was a problem for children's attainment in primary school. Pupils' motivation and finding quiet places to study were also seen as hindrances. Worryingly, a high proportion of teachers felt that receiving lower-than-expected grades to be a constraint on pupils' futures, with a far lower proportion feeling that better-than-expected grades may in fact broaden pupils' future horizons.

Secondary pupils also generally held positive feelings towards their futures. However, finding a quiet place to study was a commonly reported hindrance for secondary pupils, as was personal motivation. Only a small proportion expressing concerns that their ambitions might conflict with those of their parents', teachers', or friends'.

On a positive note, the majority of students said

they were not afraid to share their hopes and ambitions, and were quite confident of achieving them. Parents of secondary pupils felt that their children had reasonable opportunities to talk with teachers about the future, but were more confident in their ability to talk with family members or other young people. Once again, teachers were more negative, reporting that obstacles for students achieving their ambitions included a lack of support from parents, motivation, and pupils' own ability. Furthermore, they felt that students' ideas for their future conflicts often with their parents and that students change their ideas and aspirations frequently for a variety of reasons.

Aspirations and goals

Interviews with parents reveal that they understandably have aspirations for their children's futures, which also take into account their needs and talents. Parents generally held high expectations for their children and acknowledged the importance of education in helping them achieve these goals:

... his father is a window cleaner. My son says that he would like to be like his father and I say no! You need to be more than that and earn more money, maybe work in a bank.
[Immigrant mother of a Year 6 pupil]

More specifically, many parents (including 87% of those surveyed) expressed a desire for their children to attend university:

I've been educated to A-Level standard, my husband has done his degree so we are quite academic. So I'd prefer that my [children] go to university and reach their full potential.
[Mother of a Year 9 student]

However, some parents also reflected on the challenges associated with funding their children's higher education when discussing their ambitions for university:

My older two kids went to Hautlieu.

Unfortunately, I don't think I will be able to afford to send them to university. [Mother of a Year 7 student]

Unsurprisingly, therefore, parents held high expectations for their children to exceeding their own levels of educational attainment. However, the cost of further education remained as a concern for parents.

Pupils also appeared to be equally aware of their parents' expectations:

My parents expect me to do a bit better than them because they dropped out of school at their GSCE, so they expect me to go on and do A-Levels and then do something reasonable well. [Year 9 boy in private secondary school]

This was sometimes perceived in terms of being 'pushed' to achieve in school, although this was not necessarily discussed in negative terms:

My mum especially pushes me so much because she wants me to be the best I can. I want to be a vet and she doesn't really mind so I am happy that she pushes me, but it's annoying sometimes. [Year 7 girl in state secondary school]

Others pupils desrcied a desire to emulate their parents in the future:

My dad is quite clever. He is a teacher and I would like to be quite similar to him in that I teach, but I want to go one step better: I want to be a professor and a scientist who makes stuff like world famous discoveries and that depends on my education. [Year 6 boy]

These quotes provide an insight into the various ways in which pupils framed their own desires for the future, alongside the expectations or experiences of their parents.

Parents also described their desires to do everything possible to support their children's education. However, some parents discussed the difficulties in helping with homework in this

regard:

I struggle quite a lot. They come home with their homework and I just look at it and think what on earth this is? Because it's totally different from when I was at school. [Mother of a Year 11 student in a state secondary school]

These additional insights suggest that parents face particular challenges in terms of supporting aspects of their children's learning which differed from their own knowledge or experience of school subjects (especially in maths and IT).

Conclusions: Supporting pupils' wellbeing

This chapter has considered the wellbeing of children in Jersey's schools, from the perspective of pupils, parents and teachers. Parents and pupils were found to be broadly satisfied with their experiences of primary and secondary school. In particular, schools were felt to offer a supportive environment for children's learning, coupled with a good range of activities. However, some secondary pupils felt that non-fee paying schools needed to do more to challenge them academically and several also complained that disruptions in class sometimes hindered their learning. Although the overall picture was one of general satisfaction, the transition between primary and secondary school constituted a source of anxiety for some pupils. Many primary and secondary schools do have schemes in place which support these transitions and this was reflected in the fact that pupils' fears about secondary schools were dispelled over time.

This chapter also considered the specific question of inclusion for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and pupils for whom English was spoken as an additional language (EAL). Primary schools were felt to offer good levels of support for SEN pupils, although this appeared to rely on parents communicating with schools regarding the needs of their children. State secondary schools were also reported to offer particularly

good levels of SEN support through the work of teaching assistants and a range of measures tailored to the needs of particular learners.

Overall, Jersey's state schools appeared to be strongly committed to the principle of inclusion within mainstream education. In contrast, it was recognised that private schools had a considerable way to go in this regard, although school staff did describe new measures being put into place. The need to support a large and growing number of EAL pupils was also widely recognised as a challenge for Jersey's schools. Both primary and secondary schools did appear to be doing well in this regard, through specialist teaching and the use of translators/translated materials for parents. However, EAL pupils felt that many parents still struggled to engage with their schools or to assist with homework. More could therefore be done to support families with English skills or through translated materials.

Primary and secondary pupils appeared to be confident in their futures, as did their parents, and the survey responses did not reveal any systemic barriers that were perceived to hinder young people in achieving their goals. This picture was generally supported by teachers, although secondary teachers in particular did appear to be more concerned that barriers of motivation or academic ability may stand in the way of some pupils achieving their goals. Understandably, parents held very high aspirations towards their children's education. The vast majority hoped their children would attend university, although some were also concerned about the financial burden involved in further education. Pupils also recognised their parents' high expectations and many expressed aspirations to exceed the educational and employment opportunities enjoyed by their parents.