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**Minister for Education, Environment, Heritage, Energy & Climate
Change**

Budget Speech 2018/2019

PART I: Education

Mr Speaker

Education Revolution

I have rather a lot to say, so let's get straight into it:

What is this *Education Revolution*? What is it about it that has some so excited, and others so worried and wanting us to slow it down?

Mr Speaker, we have to see all that I am going to say against the backdrop that in UK last year there were 137.000 more pupils in schools but 5400 fewer teachers and 5400 fewer support staff.

Mr Speaker, it is not about buildings. There are buildings involved of course, but what we are about to witness is a paradigm shift in education – a radical change in the theory and the practice.

With the Department of Education shortly up to full strength for the first time in years, people will notice the difference.

Teachers and all staff, children, young people and parents, will see positive changes in the way the department engages with the public, the schools and the community as a whole. Policies are being updated or where they do not exist, developed, workstreams on issues as diverse as bilingualism and Gibraltar studies, key stage alignment and introduction of co-education will reach out from the Department into the schools at all levels in the profession.



From September these working groups will be looking in detail into the challenges and the solutions and will make recommendations for successful outcomes from the roots up. You see, Mr Speaker, we were always serious about full transparency and involvement. This has been extensive in defining the needs in our new buildings, and continues now in the run-up to the operational changes coming into effect next year.

Of course, there *will* be new buildings. These will be exceptional, designed in full discussion with the professionals, providing schools finally fit for the future making our young people better prepared and better equipped than ever before.

To summarise where we are on these: work is progressing apace at Notre Dame which we plan to open this coming September, and at the Comprehensive Schools, where we plan to inaugurate the two new co-education schools in September next year. Work on St Anne's School will commence in the autumn immediately after Notre Dame moves.

Mr Speaker, I am, delighted to confirm that having listened carefully to the views of the schools, we will this year be commencing work on a new St Martin's School, a new Bishop Fitzgerald School and a new Governor's Meadow School, in keeping with our manifesto commitment. I will be meeting with the respective head teachers tomorrow to discuss the plans and timescales in detail, with 2019 the target year. We will also be proceeding with the plans to build a new Gibraltar College.

Working with the Union

The new plans have brought Education into the public arena like never before. As part of this process the voice of the teachers' Union, like that of all unions, is an important one to make itself heard and to be listened to. And while we may not have agreed on every detail, we are all listening to each other.

The Union executive is now meeting regularly with the Government, building on and beyond its formal Social Partnership, and we are working jointly on a plan with a number of key aims which include: to work in full partnership, to carry out an in-depth organisational review of how Education is administered, to create a structure to ensure educational decision-making is fully informed, to formally enshrine all important aspects of Education in legislation, to modernise the recruitment and selection process, and to carry out a long-term review of Teachers and Learning Support Assistants.

The detail of all this work is being worked out, but there is agreement on what are the core needs of Education. And I am glad to say, a great deal of what the union is requesting was already being done and will be rolled out in the coming year.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased at how we have worked through the issues and excited to see how we are working together in developing Education.

The other schools

Mr Speaker, quite apart from the new schools, we mustn't forget that we have many other schools. This year the Department of Education has engaged a full time officer to lead on the maintenance and improvement of those we are not currently proposing to move. Works have been identified



and a programme prepared, which includes major repairs to the schools that will remain *in situ* and urgent works to those that will be moving within the next year to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose during the time that they continue in use.

Works during the last financial year have included :

- a) Bayside - Infrastructure works to improve school security.
Repairs to the spiral staircase and removal of surrounding cobblestone tripping hazard.
- b) Bayside/Westside - Specific adaptations to both secondary schools in relation to an Occupational Therapist Report.
- c) Westside - Refurbishment of the Sports Hall roof to address water ingress.
Reconditioning of Sports Hall flooring.
- d) College – Replacement of windows in the Sports Hall of the Annexe, which is used as the exam centre to improve ventilation and curb noise disturbances from traffic etc.
- e) St Joseph’s Schools building, *Middle* - Final (3rd FY) phase of the external refurbishment: Band Room (rendering & repainting).
Middle – Reconfiguration of the internal layout of school attendant’s office, kitchen and staffroom to improve facilities and staff operational requirements.
First and Middle – Internal refurbishment of the entire top floor of the building inclusive of corridors (high peak ceilings – subcontracted by GJBS - specialised spray painting).
First and Middle - Repainting of entire staircase (metal) banisters and stairwells.
First and Middle – Continuation of linoleum replacement programme in both schools – five classrooms each.
- f) St Mary’s School – Rerouting of storm water drainage to prevent flooding during inclement weather.
Construction of ground floor extension on the eastern side of the internal patio to improve and increase space for nursery relocation.
Repairs to existing corridor linoleum to make good due to floods suffered during the winter storms.
- g) Bleak House - *Maintenance* - Repainting of heritage listed timber windows on the western façade, which were replaced four years ago and are continuously exposed to inclement weather and sea spray to prevent disrepair.
Refurbishment of ladies and gents toilet facilities.
- h) St Paul’s School - Refurbishment of nursery facilities inclusive of repainting and lino replacement.
Replacement of windows in Heads and School Secretary’s Office to improve ventilation.
- i) Bishop Fitzgerald School - Installation of portakabin acclimatised classroom to provide additional pupil facilities.



Rerouting of sewer to resolve longstanding issue of blocked toilets.

Plans for the current Financial Year include:

- a) St Mary's School – Complete roof replacement to address water ingress and refurbish school.

Redirecting sewage services.

Revamping of electrical services including main distribution box to increase electrical output and ensuring adequate heating this winter.

Reconfiguration of classrooms in anticipation of key stage re-alignment.

- b) St Joseph's *First and Middle* Schools – Replacement of school annexe guttering.

Continuation of school lino replacement programme.

First – provision of benches and tree surrounds in the playground.

Middle - Works to relocate Science Room and convert to classroom to facilitate five form intake due to pupil increase.

- c) St Pauls' School - Refurbishment of pilot classroom to evaluate/assess results in anticipation of the planned works programme for next FY 2019/2020.

School activities

Mr Speaker, my speech is long enough as it is. If I were to go into the detail of what each school does by way of activities, functions, initiatives, productions, projects, fundraising and other charitable events, I would never finish. Each and every school is the equivalent almost of a whole department. Cada escuela es un mundo, and a thriving one at that. I must at least thank each and every team in each and every school or all that they do throughout the year.

This year there have been many staff movements and promotions, with some still to come. I congratulate all those who have been successful and encourage those who have not to continue to aim to progress. At this point I would like to pay tribute to the lifelong work of Alan Mason, Head of St Paul's School, who so sadly passed away after a long illness and well before his time. I would also like to thank Kenneth Saez, Head of St Bernard's Middle and Pat Duarte, Head of St Anne's, for their sterling work throughout their careers as they enter the final week of work before their retirement.

Departmental Activity

Mr Speaker, if I may now run through some details of what the Department of Education has been doing other the last financial year, and some of our plans for next:

The Chief Minister in his address gave details of our investment in scholarships.



In addition to this, the Washington Internship in 2017/18 catered for an additional twenty-one students and 2018/19 will provide for a further twenty. 100 have so far benefited from this initiative.

At schools we continue to support the Homework Club, we have purchased a new much improved bus for St Martin's School to replace the one that had been donated by charity years ago.

We have finally achieved the installation of fibre optic data cabling and enhancement of Wifi provision to all schools to improve and support the Apple teaching with technology Apple project.

We are commissioning software which will allow the introduction of an electronic pupil attendance register.

We continue to run the Gibraltar College Language School encouraging our young to diversify their knowledge of languages, with all the benefits that will bring them and our community, and we are working on expanding adult courses too.

In-service Continuous Professional and Curriculum Development training for teaching staff has included sessions on the Apple initiative, Mindfulness, Project Search, Special Educational Needs and mental health.

We have responded to specific needs of children for example by the introduction of nursing assistance to pupils with medical needs such as PEG feeding, and by engaging diabetic nurses.

We have also introduced Service Level Agreements for the maintenance of Special Needs Equipment in schools.

The Mindfulness initiative has been extended to all schools for teachers and pupils develop positive learning techniques.

Seven of our teachers attended the TES Teaching Resources SEN Show in UK.

The Department has been participating in CHAMPS - the Children Healthy and Active a Multi-agency Programme - alongside the GHA, Public Health Gibraltar, the Care Agency, Youth Service and the GSLA, which was launched in the spring. The group is working together for the common cause of helping children and their families live healthy and active lives, including reducing childhood obesity.

Mr Speaker, last September a member of the Department of Education started working with a small number of our young people with SEN on providing work placements, an initiative designed to give the students experiences that can support them to be better equipped for work. It has been very successful, with an increasing number of our students being offered employment at the end of such placements. During the coming year we will be looking at how we can develop this service further to help young people with learning difficulties enter employment.

Mental Health

Mental Health is now being given the priority it not only deserves but seriously needs. I commissioned an in-depth study into mental health in secondary schools which has now been completed, and a similar one in primary schools is commencing. The study has for the first time ever gathered together statistics on the type of problems our young people are experiencing, and is



making recommendations on how we can better prepare our teachers and provide additional support to them. This and the primary school study will inform a review of provision in which I will be working very closely with my colleague the Minister for Health. As an indication of the sort of results we have obtained, I can say that the majority of mental health problems in secondary schools arise from anxiety and domestic issues. It is only by knowing what the problems are that we can start to deal with them effectively.

To this end a few weeks ago we held a week-long training session for teachers, attended by over 120 teachers as well as other professionals and NGOs. This programme will continue, to support both teachers in the excellent work that they do in this field and of course the work of the BEST team and the Educational Psychologists.

Once again this year, the addition of an Assistant Psychologist role to the team of Educational Psychologists (EPs) has enabled our existing EPs to engage in more in-depth complex work with the rising number of pupils with Special Educational Needs.

This year the Department has sent a Trainee EP to the UK to complete her first year of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology and Child Psychology (DECPsy) at University College London. The Trainee will start working at the Department in September under the supervision of the current team. The expansion to the team will enhance the support that can be provided to our schools. The team of EPs continues to deliver on the weekly drop-in clinics aimed at parents and carers who have concerns about their children's learning, development or behaviour. The EPs have also provided an evening parenting course for families of children between the ages of 5 and 8 years who have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Later this month they are attending a training course aimed at supporting parents of teenagers on the Autistic Spectrum. The EPs will be in a position to provide this training course for parents during the next academic year.

Child Protection

The Department of Education is working hard on developing child protection policies and procedures and is working with other agencies, including the RGP and Care Agency to this end. The policy is being updated and training being provided, covering issues such as Sexting, Safeguarding and signs of safety.

Teaching and Learning with Digital Technologies

Mr Speaker, one of the areas in which we have made most progress over the past year is in teaching and learning with digital technologies.

All First Schools have received training in the use of teaching and learning strategies with hand held devices with the last school receiving the initial training on the 8th of last month.

Of the Middle Schools, St Joseph's received their training in March 2018 with Bishop Fitzgerald's and are St Anne's planned for next academic year.

The rollout of handheld devices continues.

The response of both teachers and pupils to this initiative is tremendous. It opens up so many possibilities and the children love it.



Working parties are now being set up to further develop the excellent work done in Digital Technology areas (such as the very successful Cyber Centurion) and STEM fields.

As part of improving the use of IT, Education.gov.gi will be rolled out to all schools before start of the next academic year, an initiative to streamline workflows and support the collaborative working practices now prevalent in our education system.

I must take this opportunity to congratulate all those involved in Cyber Centurion, including teachers, students and members of the private sector, as well as those involved in the Young Enterprise programme, for their commitment and success. I intend to further pursue ways of involving business in supporting education, and providing opportunities such as placements and internships for our young people.

Universities Fair

The inaugural Universities Fair was held last February, hosted at Gibraltar University supported by the Kusuma Trust. Ten Universities were represented including Gibraltar University Plans are well in hand for a much bigger event next year.

Curriculum

Mr Speaker, most importantly, we are working on a fully revised curriculum for 2019. Curriculum 2019 will contain about 15 vocational pathways designed to cater for a range of vocations not currently covered in our education system.

We are not yet doing enough for students who are either not academic or academically inclined or who, quite aside from their ability, want to take up alternative courses.

Mr Speaker, when I have attended the schools on exam results day, and shared in the excitement, my mind has always been with those who did not get to the stage of sitting exams. Where are they? Where are the young people who left school early, or who do not stay on for A levels? What are they doing? And most importantly, what are we doing for them? Curriculum 2019 will ensure that they all have the option of progressing further in a range of subject not possible now.

In addition, and most importantly, we are working on a specific Access Curriculum providing a pathway for students with Special Educational Needs regardless of where they are in our education system. A working group of representatives from the three secondary institutions and St. Martin's have been working with the Advisory Service to develop this pathway.

In order to inform the development of Education, members of the Department visited Finland, well known for its *avant garde* education policies. The visit provided an insight on teaching and learning, curriculum, pastoral care and vocational studies. Some of the ideas have already been incorporated into Curriculum 2019. Other concepts are being explored for the benefit of our children, teachers and parents.

Sustainable Schools Gibraltar



Mr Speaker, an exciting project in which the schools have been involved is Sustainable Schools Gibraltar, inspired by the EU ClimAct programme. A forum has been set up between Climact, Education and the Department of the Environment, involving schools across the age ranges. A Schools Working Party of over 30 teachers has developed the schools framework, many have already established extremely effective eco-committees in their own schools and have carried out numerous initiatives.

Revision of Education Legislation

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that the working party revising the 1974 Education Act has now completed its task and the final draft will shortly be discussed with stakeholders before publication as a Bill in the autumn. In advance of this, Mr Speaker, I will be activating something that is provided for in the current Act but which has not been in existence for many decades, and so I will shortly be appointing the statutory Education Council to advise me and the Education team, on matters relating to education.

Other Aims

In listening to teachers on my regular visits around the schools over the past year and a half, there are regular issues that concern them. Clearly there is some anxiety about the changes that we are bringing about. That is natural, and is positive and constructive anxiety, and we will work together to ensure smooth transitions.

But other concerns are more longstanding. One was the unreliability of internet connection which, I am glad to say has much improved in the past year. Another is the length of time that the filling of posts take from advertising to informing the applicants of the results. I am working closely with the Chief Secretary and the Human Resources Department to resolve this.

One concern that I have is the threat of losing our bilingualism. Being bi-or multilingual has recognised benefits to intellectual and social development, to and is proven to delay the onset of dementia. Llanito is also part of the essence of what it is to be Gibraltarian. It is an intrinsic part of our culture, of who we are. Sadly, for a number of reasons, many of our youngest cannot hold a fluent Llanito conversation. Mr Speaker, we will work to ensure that the education system encourages our children to use both of our languages. My four year old granddaughter's rendition of 'Itsy-bitsy Araña', learnt at St Joseph's Nursery this year, certainly gives me hope for the future.

My final niggle is the perception that there still is within the education department in the widest sense, that the Department stops at Queensway. Mr Speaker, all of us who work in education, from Bleak House in the south to Bayside in the north, are part of one continuum and it is imperative that any sense of 'them and us' disappears. The new Director and I am committed to ensuring that this happens.

Mr Speaker, I make it a point to make regular visits to all our educational institutions. What I enjoy most of my work in education is talking to teachers, other staff and pupils, understanding the problems, challenges, and successes for myself, and I want here to publicly thank all the schools for their hospitality and for always making me feel so welcome. I feel that I have made many friends among the professionals in education.



Back to the revolution

Mr Speaker, just last week, I met with the Head students of our three secondary institutions, Mehwish Salman from Westside, Mathew Porter and Jasmine Mahtani from Bayside and Rebecca Pedder from the College. It was a serious, enjoyable, inspiring two hours of conversation. They made some extremely valuable suggestions, and I was able to see that we agreed on so much. I could see their excitement at the contribution that they make, their praise for the support that they get from their teachers, and in deed they made a few useful suggestions.

And I reflected. It brought home something that is of course obvious, but that always hits me when I'm talking to young people. That this is what it's about; that we have such a responsibility to them; that I am privileged to be in the position that I am and that I will do everything I possibly can to ensure that they are well looked after and given the opportunities that they all deserve. Not just the high academic flyers – but them too; not just the ones who do their homework on time – but them too.

Because it's not all about exams – but they are certainly important for some – but not for all.

Because we believe in a fully inclusive and equal society and we will ensure a fully inclusive and equal system of education for Gibraltar.

Things are changing, from opening up vocational pathways to no longer streaming young children at year 3. We are open to change that is good. Mr Speaker, this is the revolution I am talking about. We have to question, we have to progress, we have to reconsider and reassess, we have to change.

Mr Speaker, Grace Hopper – the American computer scientist and rear-admiral also known as 'Amazing Grace', said that "The most dangerous phrase in the language is 'we've always done it this way'"

This is wisdom that transcends the ages, Mr Speaker. A long time before her, in 307 BC, King Wu-ling of Zhao, in NE China expressed the same sentiments in a slightly different way. He wrote, "A talent for following the ways of yesterday is not sufficient to improve the world of today, for those who use the old to define the new do not achieve change."

The work to bring about this change begins now. With the team across Education, we can plan it and can drive it, but it is the teachers ultimately who will deliver it. It doesn't really depend on the budget, it depends on the teachers. We are blessed with a strong, motivated cadre of excellent teaching professionals, and supporting personnel. It is to them that we all of us owe who we are, and to them that we will owe the future.

Mr Speaker, those who have been to my office will know that Kermit the Frog has pride of place there. Its creator, Jim Henson, is known for the words, "Kids don't remember what you try to teach them, they remember who you are".

Mr Speaker, I want to create an education way-of-being that will support teachers in a way that they will be able to deliver the best; that they do not have to worry about laptops-not-working or classroom temperatures being too low. I want teachers to be able to be who they are so that the children of tomorrow, as they go through their lives and take their place in our community will, just as Jim Henson said, remember who they are.

