



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & TRAINING
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Gibraltar

Minister for Education & Training, The Hon C G Beltran

PRESS RELEASE

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The lead article in the Panorama newspaper of the 5th August 2011 “Concern Over Violence at Bayside Comprehensive” is condemned by Government as being misleading, factually incorrect and a raw attempt at causing unnecessary anxiety and concern to parents whose children already attend or will be attending Bayside School as from this September.

There are no “sinister signs” and neither is there evidence to support the argument suggested by Panorama that there is growing concern amongst teachers about “increasing violence” in our schools. Indeed the police presence outside the school gates referred to in the article can only relate to the longstanding and very welcome support offered by the RGP in the form of the Community Constables who assist teachers with the daily arrival and departure of over 1000 pupils, many of whom do so using their own vehicles.

To state, as Panorama does, that the RGP are there “... in order to prevent any violent behaviour amongst students breaking out!” is a crass, scandalous and false statement suggesting that the school is a breeding ground for disorder, that violence is endemic in the system and that the danger exists that it will spread to society at large. Neither the school nor the Department of Education and Training has seen evidence to suggest as the Panorama does, that over the last year violence or drugs related incidents “may have made their way into the classroom” or, less still, are on the increase in schools; nor have pupils been arrested for offences of this sort. It is also not true that pupils have been expelled or that the school has recorded any

cases of verbal or physical assaults against teachers. Curiously, what is true, is that the RGP have complained to Panorama, following the appearance of the article in question, for having misrepresented information supplied by the RGP to the newspaper.

Government rejects as alarmist and sensationalist the outburst in the article that contains accusations and insinuations which are not borne out by the facts. It roundly condemns what can only be seen as a cold and calculating ploy that will cause distress to parents and teachers alike and is aimed at generating a loss of confidence in the education system generally and young people in particular.

Government does not need to be reminded by Panorama of the excellent work carried out by teachers and also ancillary staff in schools. This will be evident once again when the "A" level and GCSE results arrive in two or three weeks time. Government does, however, invite the newspaper to consider using its columns to highlight the many advances that all sectors of our education system and very particularly the area of Special Needs, have seen since 1996.

Panorama might also wish to mention that it was in the period 1988 – 1996 and not in 2011 that young people were most in danger of succumbing to the steepest moral decline in the history of Gibraltar.