

# Written evidence submitted by the St Helena Government (OTE0013)

## 1. Preamble

When education was named as a “priority” for aid assistance in the UK Government’s 2012 White Paper, teacher training and UK-Territory partnerships were two of the areas of assistance that were mentioned. The evidence below will focus on these areas and others in relation to the effectiveness of UK Government support for Saint Helena’s school students and educational institutions.

Underpinning this evidence is the assumption that the main providers of effective support for students and for schools are the teachers within those schools.

It follows on from this that a high-quality and sustainable teaching force is a prerequisite for student achievement and wellbeing. This can be better achieved than currently in Saint Helena through more effective teacher training and development on-Island, in partnership with UK institutions, such as universities and county council training and development services, and so both of these should become a priority for UK aid assistance.

In addition, terms and conditions for local teachers and the increasing demands on teachers in relation to providing a high quality service with limited support and resources especially in the area of SEND and SEMH should also become a priority for UK aid assistance.

## 2. Teacher Training and UK- territory Partnerships

Specifically, the evidence will address the question, *Is the Government reaching its aspiration to prioritise aid assistance for education to Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible territories?*

### 2.1 Current Saint Helena Government (SHG) expenditure on teacher training and development through its Education, Skills and Employment (ESE) Portfolio

- Quite rightly, the largest expenditure for the ESE Portfolio in 2023-24 is *Schools* at 67%, but the lowest (apart from *Public Library* at 1%) is *Teacher Training* at 2%.
- *Lifelong Learning* (at 12%), *Inclusion Service* (at 7%), *Management and Admin* (at 6%) and *Tertiary Education* (at 5%) are all essential services that need adequate funding, so it would be challenging for the Portfolio to redistribute its funding, either this year or in future years, to enable teacher training and development to be adequately funded.
- However, teacher training (with UK-Saint Helena partnerships embedded within it) needs more funding to achieve a high-quality and sustainable teaching force for the four Island schools.

### 2.2 Current achievement of the ESE Portfolio’s priorities related to teacher training and development

The ESE Portfolio has five main policy priority areas within the SHG Vision and Strategy Plan 2022-25 that inform and direct its work. The first two of these are:

- Enhancing educational attainment and learning outcomes for all.
- Empowering young people to access opportunities.

Improving standards of teaching in the four schools is a major priority for the Portfolio in order for progress to be made in these two priority areas.

However, at the moment:

- a very small percentage of the local teaching workforce are graduates;
- local teachers face an uneven playing field compared with UK teachers, through having to do much more independent learning on the go in classrooms;
- although a number are currently up skilling through pursuing Cambridge professional development qualifications in teaching and learning, they have insufficient time to work on these and, most importantly, to embed the sort of improvements in their practice that would have a significant impact on the learning and wellbeing of their students;
- there is no funding for support staff to provide cover for the teachers on professional development courses so as to give them sufficient study time;
- there are not enough staff responsible for teacher training and development in the teacher training centre (it is staffed by just one technical cooperation officer) and, while some professional development is going on in schools, it is not as effective as it would be if its providers received coordinated support from long-term, local staff members employed at the teacher training centre alongside providers of UK-based training and development services;
- staff have limited awareness of effective teaching and learning strategies used in successful UK schools to enhance their students' learning and wellbeing, and greater awareness and experience of these would contribute significantly to them being able to improve their teaching in Saint Helena.

### **3. Suggested areas for improvement to the UK Government's support for teacher training and UK-Saint Helena partnerships**

#### **3.1 Prioritising funding of teacher training and development**

Increased funding for teacher training and development should be provided by UK Government ODA, without taking funding away from other ESE Portfolio areas. This funding should cover:

- an expanded and localised teacher training force on-Island, supported by a partnership(s) with UK-based teacher training and development services; NB In previous years St Helena was supported by the then FCO with an St. Helena Education Support Programme. This provided opportunities for local staff to undertake exposure visits to the UK and for UK Specialists and Advisors to provide on island support and development. This support programme worked well and teachers involved saw huge benefits.
- providing local teaching staff with access to qualified mentors to support them in their professional development qualifications and opportunities which includes salaries for support staff to provide cover for teachers engaged in Cambridge, and other professional studies;
- exposure visits/short-term secondments to the UK for Saint Helenian teachers and/or teacher exchanges.

### **4. Maintaining a stable and qualified workforce**

Current situation in relation to the teaching workforce in addition to teacher training as indicated above

- Statistics in relation to numbers of local teachers who have a professional teaching qualification are as follows; 78% which is 36 out of 46 local teaching staff are qualified to at least L4. This accounts for 50%, 3/6 EYFS teachers, 94%, 16/17 primary teachers and 73%, 17/23 secondary teachers. The majority of which hold the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching and Learning at Level 4.
- Salaries of teachers and Teaching Assistant are below 40% of UK salaries for similar roles
- Recruitment of suitably qualified teachers to teach to A level in the core subjects of English, Maths, Science and IT/Computer Science is becoming increasingly difficult due to competing salaries offered elsewhere
- Retention of teachers is becoming more challenging due to competing salaries off shore and on-island
- Staffing shortages mean that local secondary teachers are teaching subjects for which they do not have the level of knowledge required. Distance learning is a resource which is being utilised but this demand is more than the school can currently cater for
- Constant demands on cover due to staff shortages is demoralising and exhausting the current workforce
- TC teachers salaries are triple those of local staff which contributes to discontentment amongst the local workforce
- Large numbers of students with SEND/SEMH. Currently numbers of students on our SEND Register are as follows: Secondary 45 students out of a school population of 219 = 20.5%; Primary 55 students out of a school population of 297 = 18.5% NB: This excludes those who are being catered for through School Action.
- The span of specific conditions and disabilities has also grown. We are having to cater for an increasing number of children in our system who are on the Autistic Spectrum, have ADHD, are strongly at risk of dyslexia and have limited cognition in learning. In addition, we are catering for individual cases of children with Downs Syndrome, Klinefelter Syndrome, Turners, Achondroplasia and Cerebral Palsy.
- Catering for increasing numbers of students with SEND and SEMH in schools is becoming more challenging for local staff as there are no professional support systems on island such as Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist
- Staff who support students with SEND and SEMH are untrained due to lack of professional support as indicated above
- Some support has been sourced through the Hampshire County Council link but this is insufficient for current needs
- Standards of teaching and learning are being affected as a result of all of the above

## **5. Suggested areas for improvement to the UK Government's support for education**

Increased funding for education should be provided by UK Government ODA, without taking funding away from other ESE Portfolio areas. This funding should cover:

- Supporting the retention and training of local staff by allocating a budget to Education which improves the Terms and Conditions for local staff (including training and career development as per above) and supports minimal salaries of at least 60% of UK salaries for similar roles

- Enhance salary levels for TC teachers to reduce the impact of competing salaries elsewhere
- The designation of professionals to the island to support in the holistic development of our children with SEND and SEMH and to support training and development of staff in specific areas of SEND and SEMH
- As above, give opportunity for teacher training as suggested.

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