

Sabbatical Report **Term 2/2007**

Greg Mackle **Gisborne Boys' High School**

Executive Summary

My time on Sabbatical Leave during Term 2/2007 was spent in France visiting three schools in the city of La Rochelle.

On my way to La Rochelle I was fortunate to be able to stop in Dubai for seven days and spend time at a school there.

The desire to spend a reasonable length of time in a smaller number of schools was important. On a previous sabbatical, also in Europe, I felt that I had not spent enough time in each the schools that I visited.

The report that follows is based on my observations and records ascertained from talking to Teachers, Principals, Deans and Students about the focus areas that were decided before I left New Zealand.

New Zealand is a very small country that is a very long way from other countries and with respect to education, very isolated from the educational "systems" that are in place around the world. For me, the chance to observe and enquire about these other systems and to compare them to what is in place in our country, was an opportunity that was totally rewarding, enlightening, and a positive enhancement that "we" do very well, for such a small population, with limited resources, in providing young people with quality learning opportunities throughout our whole education system.

One other thing that was also continually reinforced throughout my Sabbatical Leave was the impact that Technology, specifically Information Technology, has on our ability to communicate, learn from and understand each other, no matter where we are in the world, or what "system" we are working with/in. I was able to immediately access and discuss with the Principals and Deans relevant information on curriculum, management structures, assessment, and qualifications by utilising the various education websites available.

The French culture was an interesting aspect of my desire to visit to schools in La Rochelle. To me, such things as; a very rigid central Government control of all that goes on in France, the belief that France " has got it right ", and finally the cultural characteristic of the right to "down time", was both a positive and a negative that I had to adjust to. Students and teachers were definitely not accessible during the hours of 12.00pm through to 2.00pm, schools were closed on Wednesday/Thursday afternoons, holidays for such things as Ascension Thursday, The End of World War II, Anti-slavery Day; seemed to be continually slotted in. (Interestingly, the Presidential election took place on a Sunday)...such is France !

The language barrier was non-existent. My French is very limited. "Their" English was excellent! I made every effort to speak/expand my limited French and this was appreciated greatly. Fortunately I am reasonably good at comprehending written French, and when verbal communication got stuck, written communication took over.

Being so isolated at the bottom of the world certainly deprives us of an appreciation of other languages and is a barrier to learning languages. We do not place great importance on being able to communicate with other people in languages other than English. I suppose too, that because Europe is such a compact group of countries, it is essential that individuals are able to communicate with each other in other languages apart from their own National language.

Focus Areas for Schools That Were Visited

- What Programmes are in place for Careers/Transition in Schools for students aged 13-18 years.
- What Programmes are in place in Schools for the support of students in Literacy and Health.
- What is the Compulsory Curriculum in Schools. What relationship is there between the Compulsory Curriculum in Junior Schools and the Optional Curriculum in the Senior School.
- What are the Management Structures of the Schools visited.

While these were my stated focus areas before taking the sabbatical it was important to keep an open mind with respect to the uniqueness of each "system" of education that I experienced.

Schools Visited During the Sabbatical.

The International School of Choueifat- Dubai

This was a bonus experience thanks to Mr. Salvi Gargiulo and his wife Trish. I stayed with Salvi and Trish for 7 days at the start of the Sabbatical. Salvi was the Assistant Director at this school, and Trish was the Academic Quality controller for the Kindergarten Department. This School of nearly 2600 students from age 3 years through to 18/19 years was completely different to any other School that I have encountered. The whole educational system is based on "The SABIS Educational System".

There are 25 Sabis Schools around the world.

7 in the United Arab Emirates; 7 in United States of America; 2 in Lebanon; 2 in Germany; 2 in Egypt; 1 in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman Syria and Pakistan.

This system is so different from any other educational system that it is very easy to be negative or dismissive with respect to the methods used to foster learning at every level. While it might seem to be very draconian and a model of survival of the fittest to a New Zealand teacher, it fits the needs of parents who enrol their children at the school. Indeed judging by the demand for places at the school, it is seen as a very successful school.

The School Prospectus gives you some idea of the SABIS Educational System.

" Academic Goals:

To qualify every student for entrance into colleges/universities around the world.

To provide a well rounded education based on a mastery of English and Mathematics

To enable students to acquire a firm command of a second language.

To train students in logical reasoning and critical thinking.

To prepare students to be able to sustain intellectual efforts for long periods.

To generate excitement for life long learning.

Non-Academic Goals:

Uphold high standards of ethical, moral and civic conduct.

Make informed decisions on social issues.

Defend convictions and reverse negative peer pressure.

Participate in extracurricular activities, school management and community work.

Foster tolerance, cooperation and teamwork.

Understand the people of the world through an appreciation of differences as well as similarities. "

This sounds like the school that everyone should go to !

If these are the goals of the SABIS system, then what makes SABIS unique ?

“Planning and Preparation.

Teaching methodically and comprehensively using the SABIS teaching methods.

Conducting frequent and regular testing.

Continuous and appropriate follow up.

Encouraging active student participation in the education process. ”

This is where I start to have doubts about the SABIS system. The actual reality is:

- There were a number of untrained/unqualified teachers at the school from the UK who received a one week induction course on how to teach the SABIS way. For trained and qualified teachers, who were also at the school, the SABIS way seemed to restrict what I will call “Professional Experience/Qualities”. There was absolutely no freedom to deviate from the SABIS way.
If you were reported as doing so you were dismissed ! Immediately!
- Testing seemed to dominate teaching. Both students and teachers were under enormous pressure to get results that confirmed the SABIS way as being successful. This included every year level from KG1-first Kindergarten Level; through to Grade 13- last year level at the school.
- A Big Brother culture existed at the school in that staff were under constant scrutiny from not only management, but also other teaching staff, supervisors and students.
- Teachers were not allowed to have contact with parents in any way at all. This was the responsibility of the Director and the Academic Quality Controllers.

All of the above disquieting features of this school could possibly be summed up in the following quote from the Prospectus.

“No one who studies in a school in the SABIS School Network is allowed to ‘fail in peace’ ”.

In fact students and teachers are hounded, monitored, checked, evaluated, retested, until they either fail, succeed or move to a more humane education system.

This statement may seem a little harsh. However, at this school there was no collegiality, students were given little chance to be individuals and conforming to the SABIS System was above all else.

Lycee Jean Dautet- La Rochelle

This was the first school that I visited in La Rochelle.

The school was in the middle of La Rochelle easily accessible by both students and teachers.

There were 3000 students at the school, both boys and girls. Interestingly it was also a boarding school with some 250 boarders who were only in residence from Sunday night through to Saturday midday.

There were 150 teachers and a very large number of administrative staff.

I was very fortunate to talk to the 3 Year Level Deans, (Conseillere Principale d’ Education), and the Principal. I also visited a number of classes and talked to the students who were in the last 3 years of their secondary school education. The student’s ages ranged from 15 years old in 1st Year, 16-17 years old in 2nd Year, and 18-19 years old in 3rd Year (Terminal Year).

The school was very old being first established in the 14th Century as a Girls School, then a Boys School, and finally a Co-ed Lycee. While it was in the middle of a large city, the grounds and buildings were spacious with plenty of grass areas and very large old oak trees.

It even had its own concrete bunker, built by the German occupation forces during World War II, when it was taken over and used as a Military Hospital. The bunker provides an excellent archive storage facility. The headmaster lived on site in a very old, well maintained mansion. All in all a very peaceful place of learning with a long a remarkable history of education. This Lycee was an Academic Lycee, which prepared its students for the International Baccalaureate Examination in subjects that we would consider as being suitable for our top academic students. It was a school that had a reputation for quality learning and producing top academic students who went on to various French Universities. It had little problem in attracting students. (There was some sort of zoning system in place, but how it worked was not very clear to me.)

Mr. Biron the Principal was very proud of the school's reputation in Mathematics, Science(s), and Languages/Classics. The school also had an enviable reputation in sports such as Gymnastics, Yachting, Dance and Music, with numerous national awards, trophies and cups on display.

The school, students and teachers were preparing for the International Baccalaureate Examinations in the 3-4 days that I was at the school. It was obviously a very busy time of the year for everyone. I was very thankful and appreciative of the time that was given to me. Overall impression was one of a student body who were friendly, mature and focussed on doing their very best in the upcoming examinations and in their school exams. The whole school environment was positive in all respects.

Lycee Jean Vieljeux- La Rochelle

This Lycee was a Technical and Professional school. This meant that the students undertook study in all aspects of Technology, and what was termed Professional studies such as ICT, Accounting, Economics, Legal Studies, Information Management.

As in other Lycee's, students were aged from 15 years in 1st Year, 16-17 years in 2nd Year; and 18-19 years in 3rd Year. There were 1300 students at the school and again, surprisingly, 150 boarding students.

In the 3rd year students sat the International Baccalaureate in a range of different subjects as relevant to their careers or future education. Students could qualify for University education or Polytechnic education. They were also prepared for Vocational careers.

I spent 3 days at this school mainly looking at their Technology department. This was a very well resourced curriculum area. Workshops were a hive of activity with mainly boys and only 4-5 girls that I counted. The predominance of boys was confirmed by the Conscillere Principale d' Education who gave up her time to ensure that everything that I wanted to see and learn about over the 3 days was totally catered for. I was also given a number of opportunities to talk to the students about their school and their studies.

The school did not have the same history as Lycee Jean Dautet being 60 years old.

There seemed to be a different culture of student learning and participation in school life that did not any way detract from the overall impression of a school that was providing learning opportunities for students who were not academic but never-the-less were being challenged to excel in Technology related studies.

The Automotive facility was truly amazing. In the workshop there were 8 new cars provided by Renault, Citron, Peugeot for students to work with. The workshop was indeed a fully functioning and resourced automotive workshop. Students were actively engaged in every aspect of servicing and repairing vehicles.

As well as their specific Technology studies, learning in French, English, and Mathematics was required. No Science ! It was obvious that this subject was not considered necessary as it was provided for in Technology.

Overall impression was of a school that was busy challenging students to further their learning in a curriculum that was suited to their needs and career aspirations and certainly completely different from Lycee Jean Dautet.

College Eugene Fromentin- La Rochelle

This College was a College that catered for students aged 11- 15 years old. It was located at the centre of La Rochelle. Before I visited the school I was informed by the Principals of the other schools that I had visited in La Rochelle that it was the most prestigious of the Year 11-15 Colleges in La Rochelle. First impressions certainly confirmed this statement.

It took me some time to actually gain admission to the college. Having managed to actually get inside the school...physically... I then had to convince the concierge who guarded the entrance that I was actually a visiting Principal from New Zealand, and that I did have an appointment with the Principal. All this was done in a mixture of very poor French on my part, and not great English on his part. Still we got there in the end!

The College opened in 1561, and it was the only educational institution that I visited that made a major "thing" about its past and traditions. Maybe this was a reason for the comment from other Principals that it was the most prestigious Year 11-15 College in La Rochelle. The whole school was enclosed by a very large and impressive wall. Inside the wall that went right around the city block that the school occupied were green grass courtyards, oak trees of very large proportions, great rest and recreation areas, and major statues and memorials to ex-students who had died in various wars/conflicts including the siege of La Rochelle. Being a College, and therefore a place of learning for students aged 11-15 years the whole curriculum of the school was aimed at equipping students for further education at Lycees. The Principal was great. She willingly gave up 4-5 hours of her time to talk to me about her school, answer all my questions and show me around her school. She was obviously very proud of the school.

There were 860 students at the school and 80 teachers, with 10 Administration staff and 15 "ancillary" staff. This was a recurring fact about all the schools that I visited in France...the very positive Staff/Student ratios.

The imposing School GATE was locked throughout the day. As I have mentioned previously, getting into the school was a real mission. Getting out was impossible if you were a student and a little bit difficult if you were a visitor.

When I asked the Principal about this she very definitely replied that students came to her school to learn, and as such had absolutely no reason to leave during the day. There was also a safety issue for the students from undesirables who may try to enter the school from the city. I did not feel that it was my job to argue against these concepts.

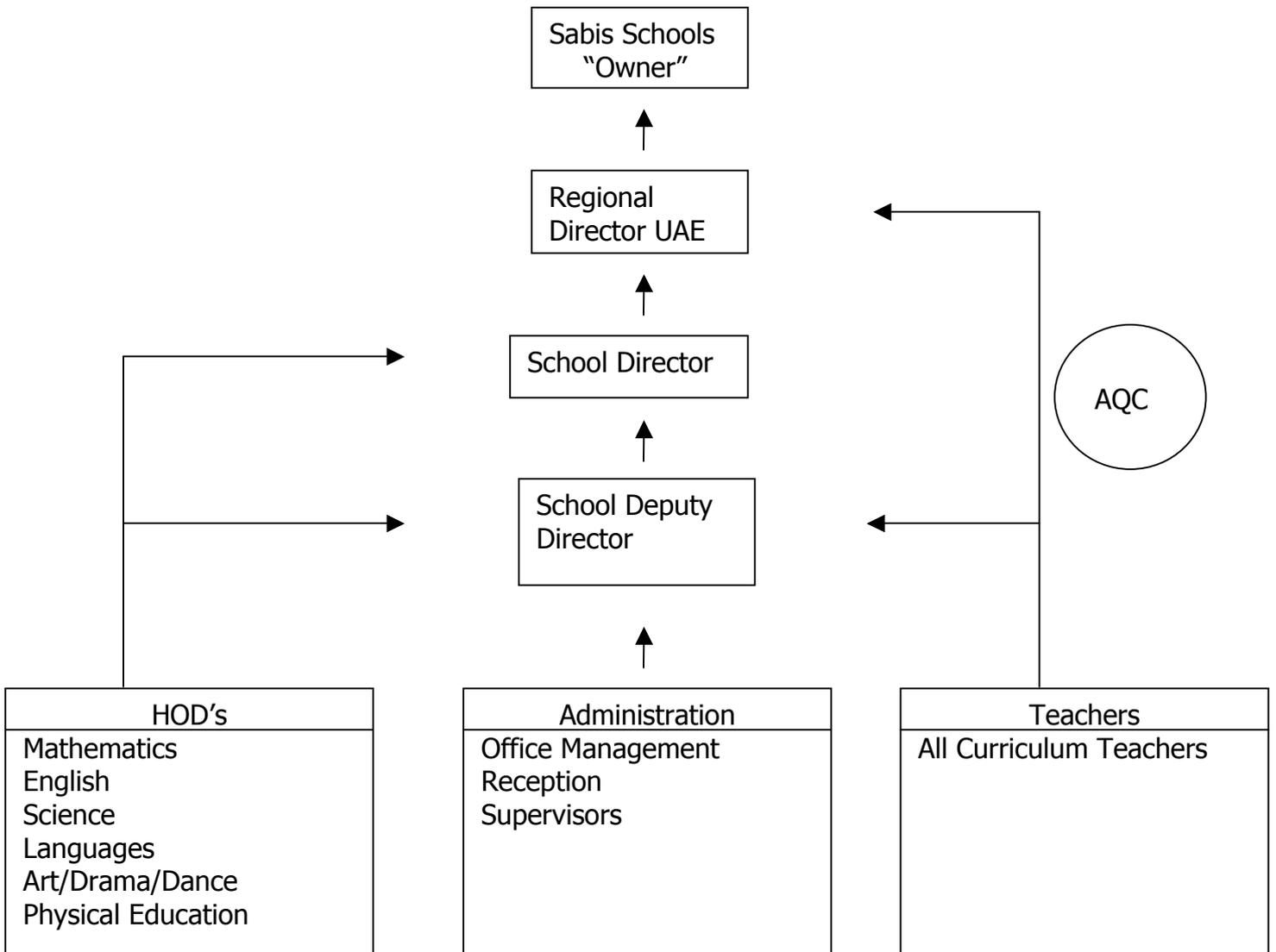
Focus Area 1

Management Structures

The International School of Choueifat- Dubai

The Management Structure at this school was based very much on a Private Company model, as shown in the following diagram.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF CHOUEIFAT – DUBAI



This structure was very much a pyramid structure.

Ultimate authority and all decision making rested with the Regional Director, who delivered the "HOW/WHAT/WHEN" of the Sabis method of teaching to everyone below him, (often by means of video communication).

There was little professional collegiality and every person in the system was likely to be placed on a warning at the slightest deviation from the Sabis method or "other" misdemeanours.

Somewhere in this structure Academic Quality Controllers, (AQC's) fitted.

The AQC's were responsible for monitoring, auditing and reporting on all staff's ability...or not, to deliver the Sabis education.

Any deviation was immediately reported to the School Director, but most probably the Regional Director. There was a definite feeling of a "Big Brother" system at the school. Teachers that I talked to were very nervous about this.

The AQC's were responsible for the Supervisors who manned corridor stations throughout the school.

At the slightest sign of problems in corridors or classrooms the supervisor arrived.

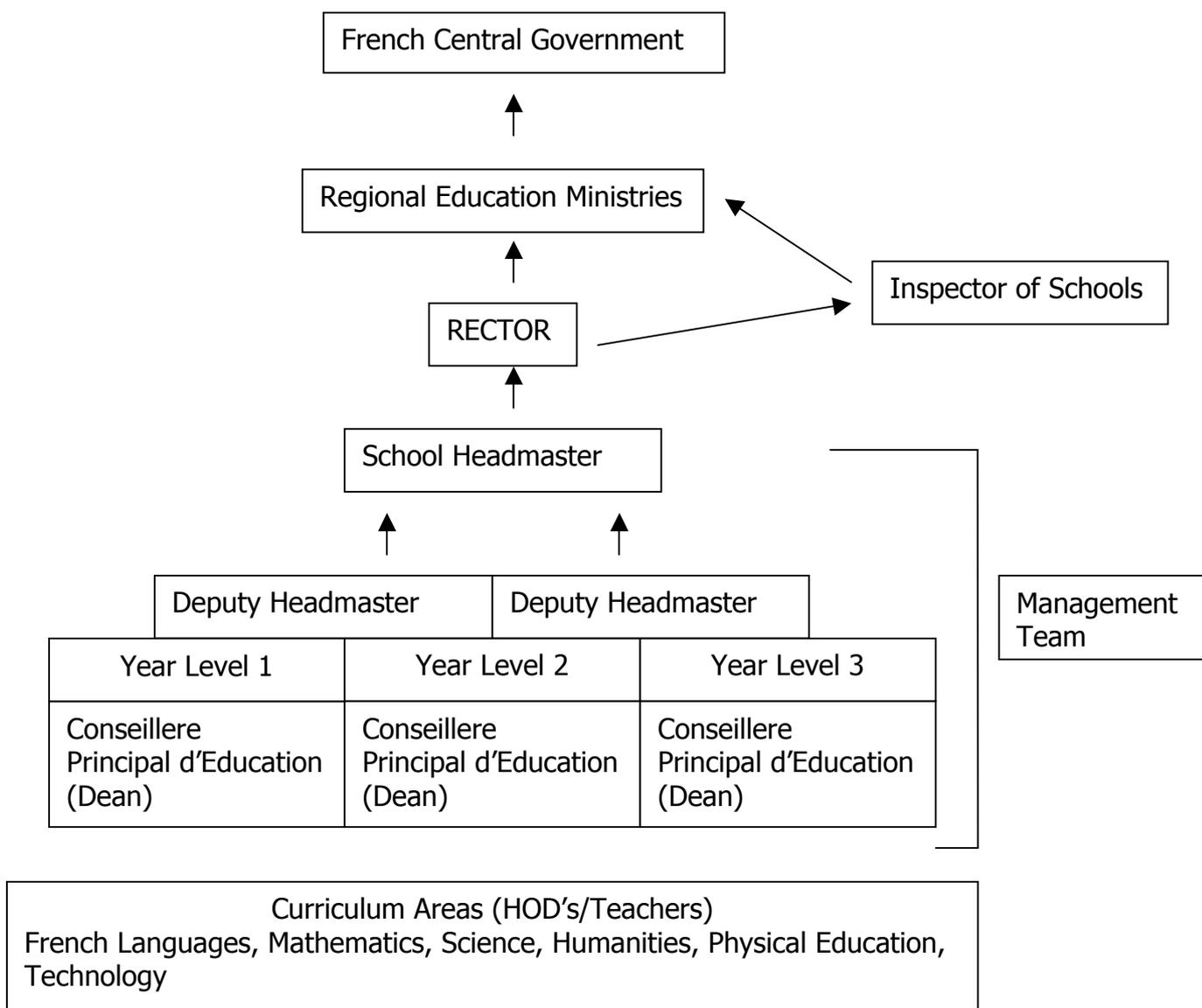
The Supervisors also reported on the effectiveness of the Teachers, (possibly also the AQC's, HOD's, Deputy Director and School Director), in delivering or implementing the Sabis method of teaching/learning.

There was a suggestion from teachers that these Supervisors reported directly to the Regional Director.

All this seems a little draconian at the very least. I have formed this conclusion after talking to the staff and students at the school.

In support of this conclusion, 2 weeks after visiting the school, the School Director who had been in her position for 8 years was given 2 days notice of dismissal. Interestingly one of the Supervisors was appointed to her position.

Lycee Jean Dautet- La Rochelle



A little bit confusing was my first impression.

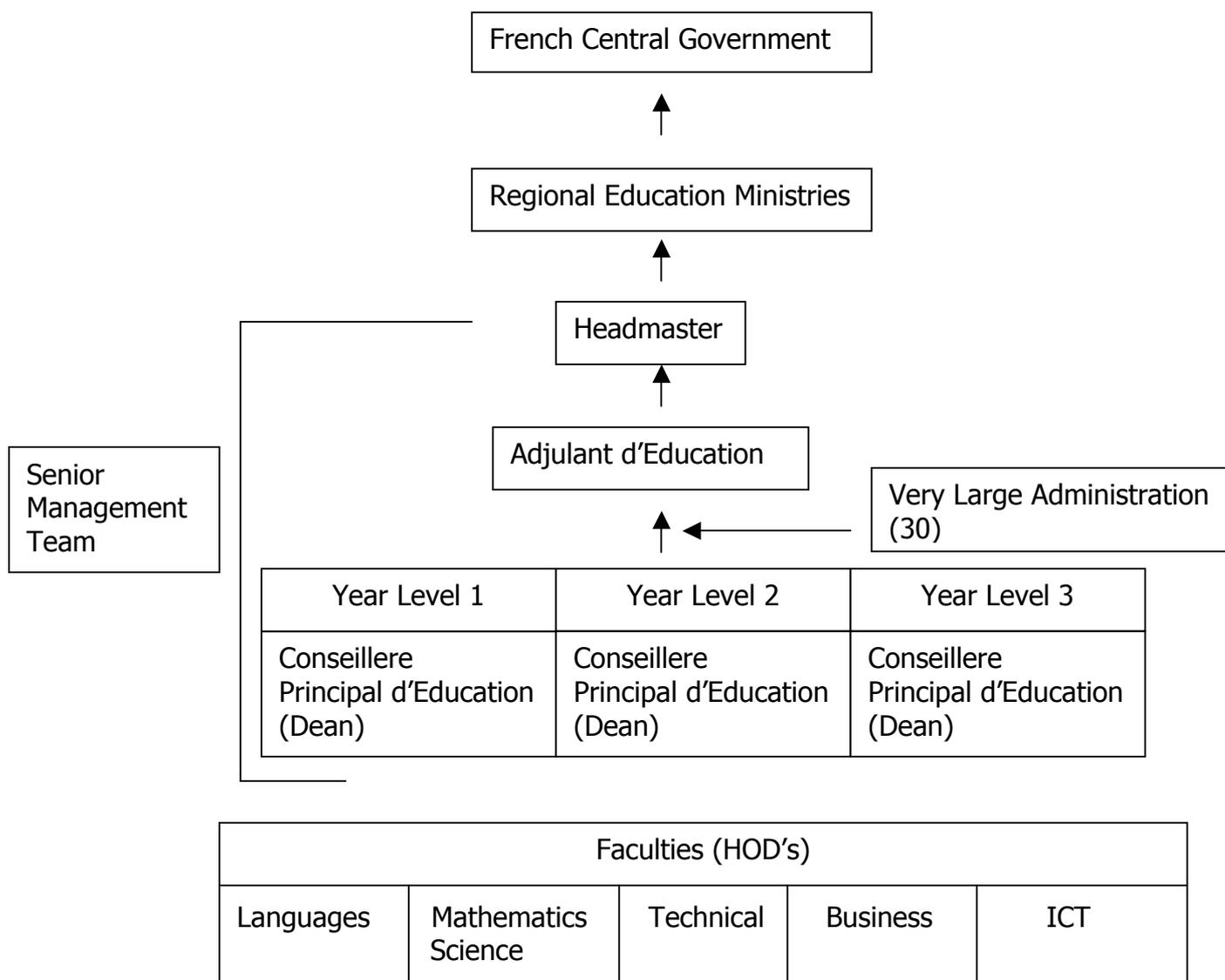
The Senior Managers that I talked to made it very clear that there was an ingrained culture or definite division between Management and Teachers. So my question as to who monitors/controls/audits the delivery of the curriculum met with what is a very typical French answer.... "ah" !

Another thing that was made clear to me was that there is a great deal of Central Control of what is taught, how, when. All of the Senior Managers were looking forward to this changing with the election of a new President. But as Mr. Biron pointed out this change will take some time and it will be met with great resistance from the teacher unions. The concept of equality for all is a large part of the French way of life.

"Because teachers were only required to be at school for the classes that they taught, it would be very difficult to move ahead in a consultative way in terms of local curriculum and student based needs". This statement from Mr. Biron, seemed to sum up the future for this school and maybe the French Education system. Time will tell.

The Senior Management Team all worked very long hours, with the 3 Deans being the hardest working. They did still manage to take the mandatory 2 hours off for lunch at 12.00pm. Deans were rostered on to supervise the 250 boarders 1 week in 3 with the week starting on Sunday night and finishing on Friday night. Boarders only stayed in the boarding hostel for 6 days/nights each week.

Lycee Jean Vieljeux- La Rochelle



This school was a busy school !

Students, Teachers, and Senior Management were all doing things...happily.

The Deputy Principal introduced himself as the Adjutant d' Education. A lovely description of a person who was "flat out" organising the end of year exam timetable, room changes, supervising staff. He still managed to allocate some time to talk to me over a 2 hour coffee. You just have to admire the kaupapa of French organisation v life !

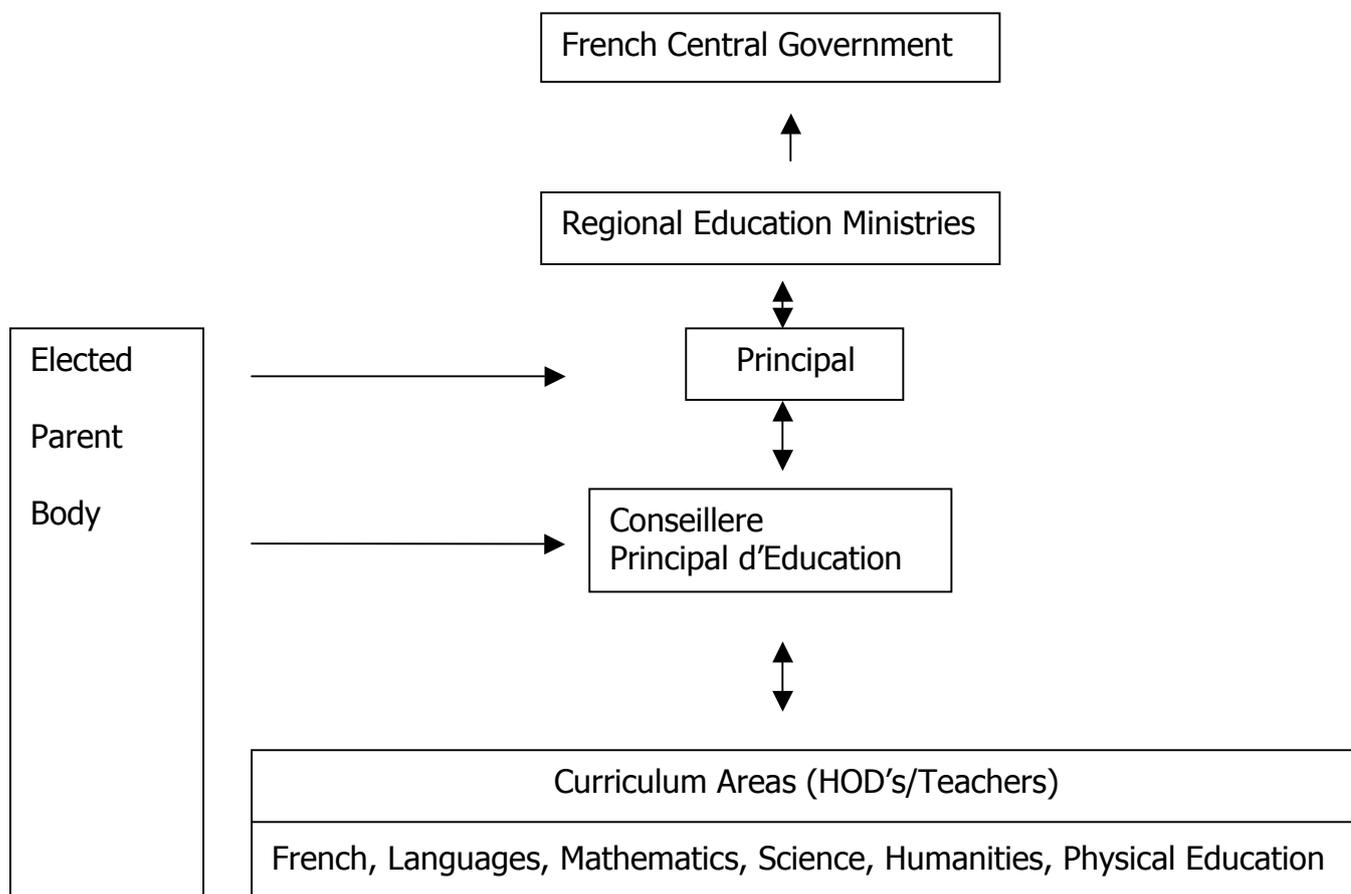
In this school there was an enormous administration section of this school. 30 different people working in the administration block. I did not find time to track down the roles and responsibilities of administration staff. They were all very helpful.

There was a much clearer line of communication between Heads of Faculties and the Senior Management Team, and there was not the same invisible barrier between Management and Teaching Staff.

Once again much of the day to day running of the school fell at the feet of the Conseillere Principals d' Education (Deans). There was some sort of student representation on the Senior Management Team that I could not exactly pin down. I did talk to the Student Representative, but how he was elected or appointed was too much for the language barrier. It seemed to me that he was listened to, asked for advice, and also delegated certain responsibilities in the big picture.

Once again the point was made by the Adjutant d' Education, that the change in the French Presidency was eagerly awaited by his Senior Management Team, but may not be so welcomed by the Teaching Staff.

College Eugene Fromentin- La Rochelle



This was a much smaller school than the Lycees that I visited. There was an air of purpose about the administration area of the school. There was much fewer administration staff at this school.

The Management structure was a lot simpler with less people on the Senior Management Team.

I would have to comment that it was difficult to see how a 3 member Senior Management Team could organise and ensure that the delivery of the curriculum was as required.

One different aspect of the management of the school was the existence of a College Council who were able to input into the organisation and running of the school. The Principal did say that at times the members of the Council interfered in some things in a negative way. She put this down to the fact that parents who were on the council were all professional people, lawyers, accountants, judges, university lecturers.

Focus Area 2

What is the Compulsory Curriculum in Schools. What relationship is there between the Compulsory Curriculum in Junior Schools and the Optional Curriculum in the Senior School.

The International School of Choueifat- Dubai

The link between the curriculum and the success of students in International examinations was very evident at this school.

From Sabis Level L, Grade 10, students were prepared for a range of different International Examinations :

GCSE, IGCSE, GCE, O-Levels, AS-Levels, AND A-level—British Examinations

TOEFL, SAT I, SAT II, and Advanced Placement---American Examinations

National Examinations---High School Diploma.

The Stages of the School

<u>School Level</u>	<u>Sabis Level</u>	<u>Curriculum</u>
A	KG1	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
B	KG2	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
C	Grade 1	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
D	Grade 2	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
E	Grade 3	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
F	Grade 4	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
G	Grade 5	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic.
H	Grade 6	Reading, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Science

Secondary

I	Grade 7	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Science
J	Grade 8	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Science
K	Grade 9	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Science
L	Grade 10	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, French, Science.
		GCE/GCSE/IGCSE Courses
M	Grade 11	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Science, Biology, Chemistry,

		Physics, Accounting, Economics, French. GCE/GCSE/IGCSE/TOEFL Courses
N	Grade 12	English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Accounting, Economics, French
O	Grade13	High School Diploma, AS, A-Levels, SAT, AP courses English, Mathematics, Art, Music, PE, IT, Arabic, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Accounting, Economics, French AS, A-Levels, AP courses.

As can be seen above there was an extensive curriculum available to students. The one omission was Technology.

The prospectus states that "the curriculum is continually revised and updated" and "it is special because :

- It is designed to meet the requirements of the most demanding universities around the world.
- It is comprehensive in that it gives students the opportunity to sit for a variety of external university recognised exams allowing them to join British, American and other universities worldwide.
- It facilitates the transfer of students into different educational systems in different countries as well as into tertiary education and makes it possible for them to continue their studies successfully".

The School offered Summer School, Special Lessons, and Full Special Classes for students who had not met the academic standards required by the regular testing/assessment regime set out below:

Students sit for internal, school generated examinations throughout their school lives as :
Level C-Level F

Continuous Assessment Tests,(CAT). Every subject 3 times each Term. The 3rd, being an end of term final.

Level G-Level O

Academic Monitoring System Tests, (AMS). Weekly for all subjects. Multiple choice. Immediate grading and follow-up. Periodic Exams.Carried out weekly. Students take 2 or more tests per subject each week.

Re-take Exams. For students who do not attain the required grades in any of the above assessment methods.

There was a very heavy emphasis on delivering the curriculum followed by assessment to ascertain students learning/understanding.

The very large and impressive School Hall had been converted into an examination centre with about 200 individual computer stations where students completed their computerised assessment. Assessment was immediately marked, data compiled/collated, and reports generated. Who needs a School Hall !!!

There was no National Curriculum, as such, rather the Curriculum in the Junior School was determined by the Curriculum in the Senior School and the different subjects that were being offered for assessment in the different types of qualifications that students were entered for.

Lycee Jean Dautet- La Rochelle

As mentioned in the description of this school, the Curriculum was very academically based. With the overall focus, to prepare students for the Baccalaureate examinations. Students at this school moved onto tertiary study at University or Polytech. The school had 3 levels of study, called "emes".

1st eme, (2^{nde})

Compulsory Subjects

Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology,
2 Languages, French, Citizenship, History and Geography, English
Medium, German Literature.

Optional Subjects

Economics, 3rd Language, ICT, Engineering, Art History, Music and
Dance.

2nd eme, (1^{ere})

Compulsory Subjects

Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology,
2 Languages, French, Citizenship,

Optional Subjects

Economics, 3rd Language, ICT, Engineering, Art History, Music and
Dance. German Literature. History and Geography, English Medium,

The main change from 1st eme to 2nd eme was the removal of a number of compulsory
subjects into the optional subject area. There was also an increase in the number of hours that
were given to the compulsory subjects.

3rd eme, (terminale)

In this level students were expected to have decided what Baccalaureate examinations they
wished to enter for. There were 3 types of courses.

Science

Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, French, German, English.

Literature

English Medium, German Literature, 3 Languages,
Art History.

Economics

Mathematics, Accounting, Economics, English, French History, ICT.

The curriculum subjects that could be offered was set by the National Ministry of Education.

There was little local curriculum content, nor was there a direct correlation between the
Lycee's curriculum and the College curriculum.

Lycee Jean Vieljeux- La Rochelle

This Lycee had a much wider curriculum than Lycee Jean Dautet, possibly because it was a
Technology School.

It was also a little easier for me to understand how the curriculum was structured as shown
below.

1^{eme}	2^{eme}	3^{eme}
French Mathematics	French Mathematics	French Mathematics
<i>2 Compulsory</i> English Spanish German	<i>1 Compulsory</i> English Spanish German	<i>Generally 6 of these Subjects as shown in the 2nd eme.</i>
<i>All Compulsory</i> Basic Technology Graphics Metal Technology Plastics	<i>3 Compulsory</i> Advanced Technology I Graphics Metals Plastics Automotive Design	

<i>2 Compulsory</i> Accounting Economics Advanced Technology ICT	<i>2 Compulsory</i> Accounting Economics ICT
<i>Not compulsory</i> Chemistry Physics Biology	<i>Not Compulsory</i> Chemistry Physics Biology

In the 1st and 2nd year students had a total of 30 hours of curriculum study, depending on the subjects that they studied.

In the 3rd year, which was the examination year, students had a minimum of 30 hours of study each week, again dependent on the subjects that they were entered for examination in.

Having obtained the Baccalaureate students moved onto 1st and 2nd year Professional studies courses at the school or at the selected Polytech of their choice.

College Eugene Fromentin- La Rochelle

The curriculum at this College was very much a general one, with the onus on preparation for moving onto the next tier of education at Lycees.

At the end of Year 4, students were assessed in 2 different ways :

National Diploma-DNB

General Certificate- GC

Both of these qualifications were internally assessed.

Depending on the grades that they obtained and their possible career choice they moved onto a Lycee suitable for their needs.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
French	French	French	French
German	German	German	German
Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Citizenship	Citizenship	Citizenship	Citizenship
European Studies	European Studies	European Studies	European Studies
Science	Science	Science	Science
Dance/Drama	Dance/Drama	Dance/Drama	Dance/Drama
Music	Music	Music	Music

In Year 3 and 4 students were given the option of studying Basic Technology, which included ICT, Classics, History or Geography.

The Principal of the school had problems with teachers who only taught 1 subject of those above. It was difficult to get teachers to teach 2-3 curriculum subjects, and restricted the timetable make-up.

At this school there was also School based Co-curricular options available, albeit in a limited range of activities; Gymnastics, Sailing, Music, Ballet, Dance.

Focus Area 3

What Programmes are in place for Careers/Transition in Schools for students aged 13-18 years.

In all but one of the schools that I visited there was scant mention of the Careers/Transition curriculum that was taught or available for students. This was somewhat disconcerting considering the emphasis that is placed on such curriculum programmes in New Zealand schools.

When I questioned Principals and/or Senior Management about this part of their curriculum the answer in reply was very brief.

“ Yes we have such programmes “, but “ I/We cannot elaborate on how these are run, their importance, and what is taught “.

At least they were up front about the lack of Careers/Transition programmes.

The International School of Choueifat- Dubai

“ We believe that all students can, and should strive to acquire the skills needed for a successful future. The school aspires to empower its students to obtain the information, expertise, proficiency and mid-set to realise and positively enhance their own life career development “.

This section of the Career Guidance paragraph in the School Prospectus is basically what happens in relation to Careers/Transition in the Sabis Educational system.

However the next and last sentence in the paragraph surmises what this means to the students, “ All upper grade students, from Grades 9-13, receive counselling about entry into university “.

This school was totally focussed on preparing every student for entry to university.

The Careers/Transition Curriculum really only considered this educational pathway.

I was fortunate to be able to talk to a number of students about their school and this was one focus that I was able to explore in depth. There were some interesting opinions offered by the students about the school and its very obvious focus on university preparation for all students, as below.

- Student A Wants to study for a Business Degree at an American University. Is not studying Accounting or Economics at school, but is instead studying Physics and Chemistry. Why ? “ because in order to get the grades necessary to get into university in America, I need to compete against the top students at our school”.
- Student B Has spent the last 14 Saturday mornings at school on a special Mathematics catch-up. Intends to go to a British University to study Law/History. Once again needs to get good grades to get accepted to a British university. Sees the Mathematics curriculum as the way to do this.
- Student C Spends 7.00am to 5.00pm at school. Of these 10 hours has only got classes for 6 hours, but is required to remain at school in order to attend catch-up classes in Physics and Chemistry. Wants to study Economics at University. Very angry young man !
- Student D Very upset at the amount of work that they are required to do in order to pass the weekly assessments for History. Wants to study Engineering at university.

A number of the students that I talked to had a lot of family pressure on them to successfully attain the necessary grades to get them into an overseas university. The UAE universities were not seen as prestigious enough.

Lycee Jean Dautet- La Rochelle

While it was obvious that this school was a very academic school and it was certainly the elite Lycee in La Rochelle, it was very narrow in its approach to providing students with Career/Transition programmes in that all students were expected to move onto university studies. There was very little if any advice and guidance given to the students in a formal curriculum.

The Conseillere Principale d' Education, seemed to be overloaded with other work and were only able to provide limited advice and guidance to students relating to their future education or career paths. They did conduct 1-1 interviews with students in their year levels twice each year.

At this school then students seemed to have already decided on their future pathways just before enrolling at the school.

Lycee Jean Vieljeux- La Rochelle

This was the school that was the exception to the other schools that I visited in that it had a fulltime Careers person, and a very well resourced, spacious Careers suite much the same as we have in New Zealand schools. There were 2 administration staff in the suite and 2 Education Assistants who were responsible for providing Career/Transition support for the students.

Students were expected to participate in a full day programme each term that delivered a Careers/Future Pathways curriculum.

The Careers Suite seemed to be a very busy on the days that I was at the school. As the Conseillere Principale d' Education pointed out it was nearing the end of the school year and there was a big demand for the services provided by the Careers staff.

College Eugene Fromentin- La Rochelle

There was no Careers/Transition programme at this school at all. As the Principal pointed out it was not necessary as students moved from the College to a Lycee at the end of their time at the College and that is where they would be able to receive careers or future education advice and guidance.

What Programmes are in place in Schools for the support of students in Literacy and Health.

This was disappointing and non-event focus area in all of the schools that I visited.

While there was some affirmation that there was a problem with some students, particularly boys, in Literacy, there were no school based programmes that were run to address the problems.

None of the schools had any baseline testing/data on the literacy levels of students such as PAT, ASTLE etc.

I may as well be asking questions of an alien when it came to gathering information about this focus area.

If these questions were extended to health...completely blank expressions...and

“ why would schools be required to teach students about health ? ”

So all in all nothing to report apart from what I have written above.

Summary

Being able to have this sabbatical leave gave me a chance to recharge the batteries and explore some areas of interest to me and Gisborne Boys' High School.

It was a little disappointing that two of the focus areas that were of great interest to me :

- What Programmes are in place for Careers/Transition in Schools for students aged 13-18 years.

- What Programmes are in place in Schools for the support of students in Literacy and Health.

Were given little emphasis in the schools that I visited, apart from one. I would have liked to find out how other Education Systems implement and deliver these programmes which seem to have gained much greater emphasis in our New Zealand Schools without the corresponding allocation of resources.

The chance to spend a considerable amount of time at each of the schools that I visited, talk to Senior Management, Staff, and Students was a refreshing break from my normal routines and demands. This in itself was the best aspect of my sabbatical leave. To be able to combine this investigation with totally different cultures in very different countries to New Zealand was great.

What has certainly been made obvious to me is the quality of our New Zealand Education System, especially the commitment of our teachers, support staff, and communities to produce the best with what we have available.

Acknowledgments/References.

International School of Choueifat- Dubai

Prospectus 2006

Mr. Salvi Garguilo. Deputy Director
Staff and Students

Jean Dautet- La Rochelle

Mr. Biron. The Principal
Conseillere Principale d' Educations
Students.

Lycee Jean Vieljeux- La Rochelle

Adjutant d' Education
Conseillere Principale d' Educations
Education Assistants
Student Representative

College Eugene Fromentin- La Rochelle

The Principal
Conseillere Principale d' Education
HOD Mathematics and Languages