

Leading the self- improving early years system

a vision for nursery schools in
the twenty-first century



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Remembering our history is important



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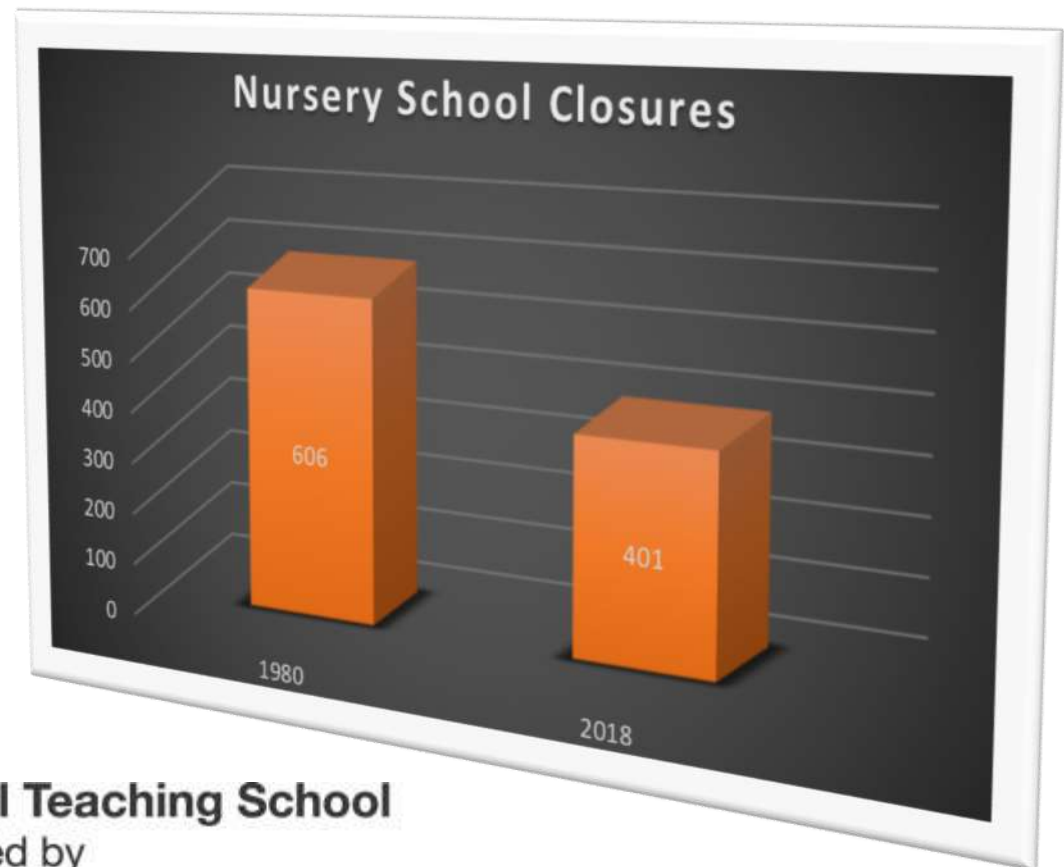
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The decline of the nursery school

- In 1980 there were more than 600 Maintained Nursery Schools
- Today there are fewer than 400



Susan Isaacs Nursery School – closed 2016



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But let's also remember...

Of all the differences between one child and another, inborn intelligence turns out to be the most stable and the most permanent ... The best teaching in the world may prove barren if it fall on the stony ground of an inherently dull and lifeless mind. (Isaacs, 1932, p. 27)



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But let's also remember...

Margaret McMillan's emphasis on the physical and remedial aspects of education and her use of medical and functional theories as a frame of reference made an implicit connection between class and pathology. The construction of working-class children as existing in a state of morbidity and abnormality emerges strongly in her reference to the place of language in the education of the working-class child: 'The speech of the slums is not a dialect. It is the symptom of serious disorder, and is to be treated as a kind of deformity' (quoted in Steedman 1990). She was



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The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
of Education, Children's Services and Skills

Early years



“The only early education provision that is at least as strong, or even stronger, in deprived areas compared with wealthier areas is nursery schools” (Ofsted, 2014).



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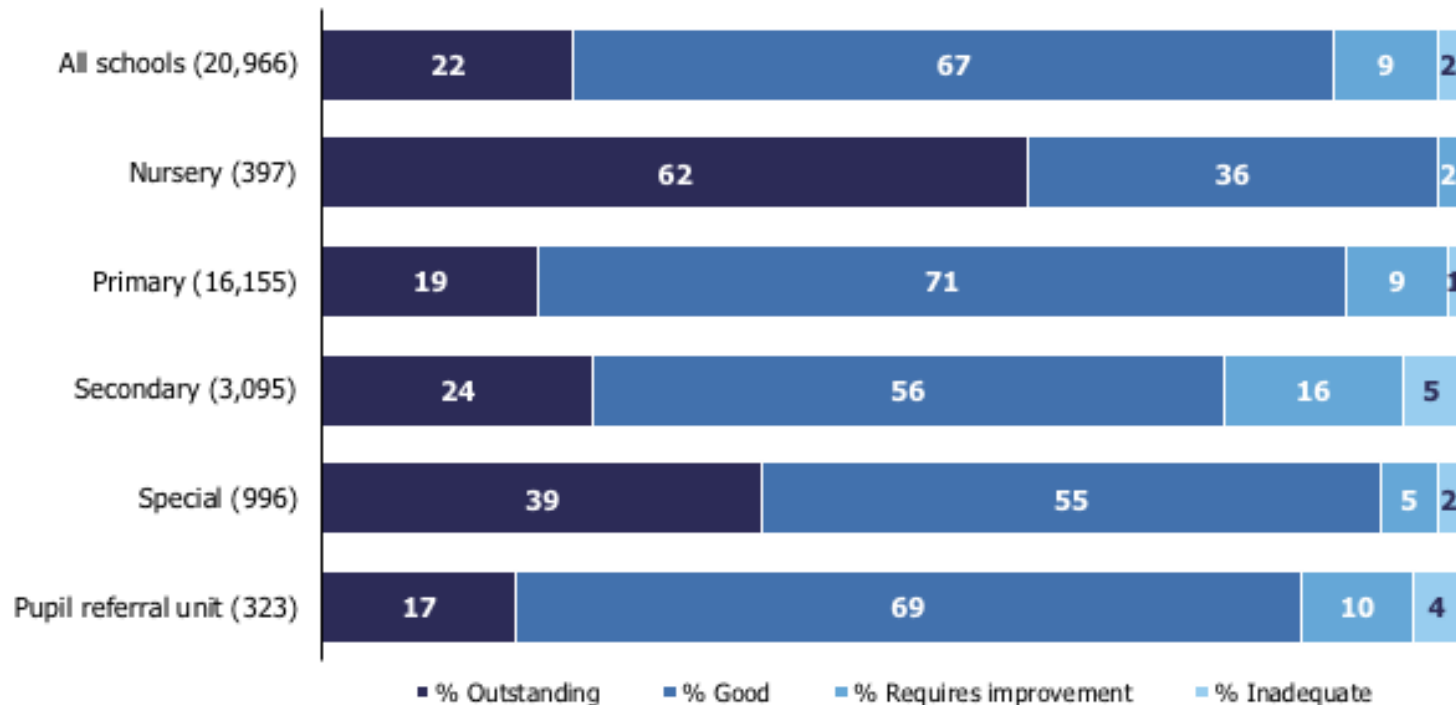
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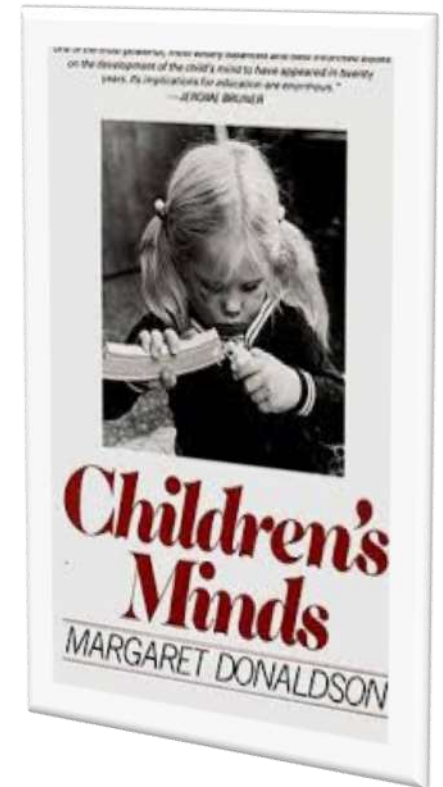
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Margaret Donaldson's utopia?



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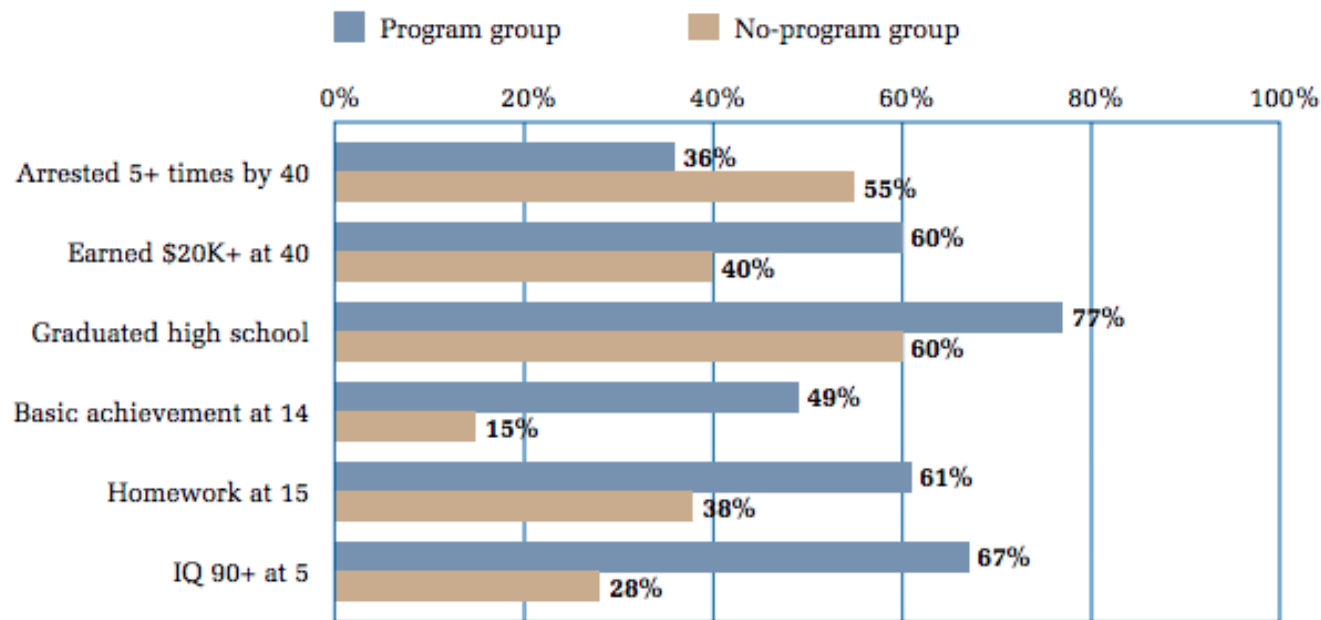
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Figure 1
Major Findings: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study at 40



What might be the unique qualities of nursery schools to lead the system?



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Leading the system

Qualities of nursery schools

Holistic view of childhood

Pedagogical expertise

Community development model

Improving children's life chances

- Engaging and enjoyable curriculum, prioritising vulnerable groups
- Partnerships with Health and Children's Services
- Parent involvement
- Promoting emotional wellbeing and resilience

Priorities in the school system

Narrow focus on results at the expense of a rich and deep curriculum

Attainment gaps

Exclusions



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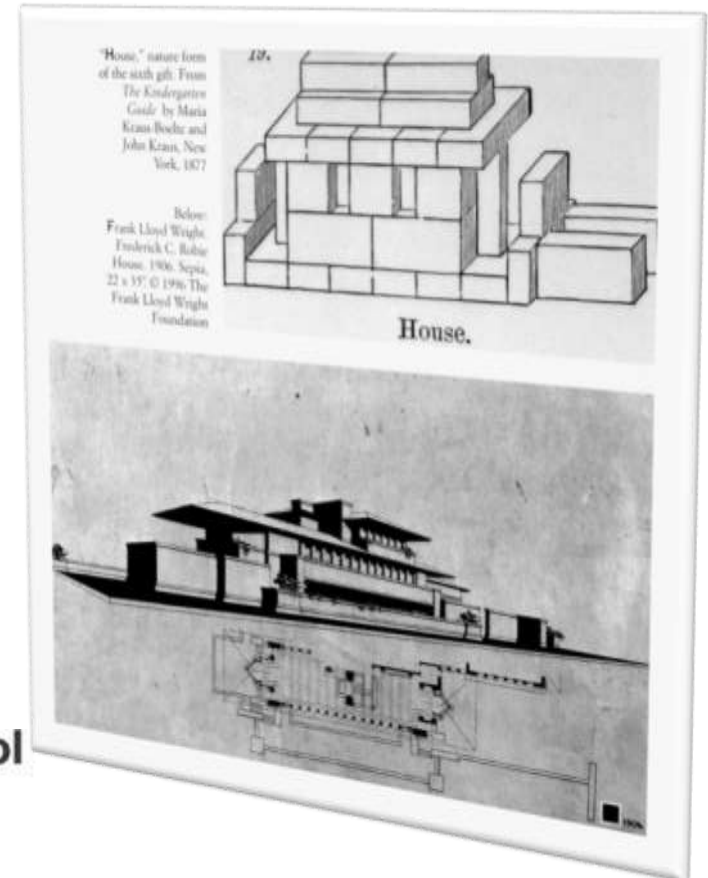
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Can there be one vision for 21st Century Nursery Schools?



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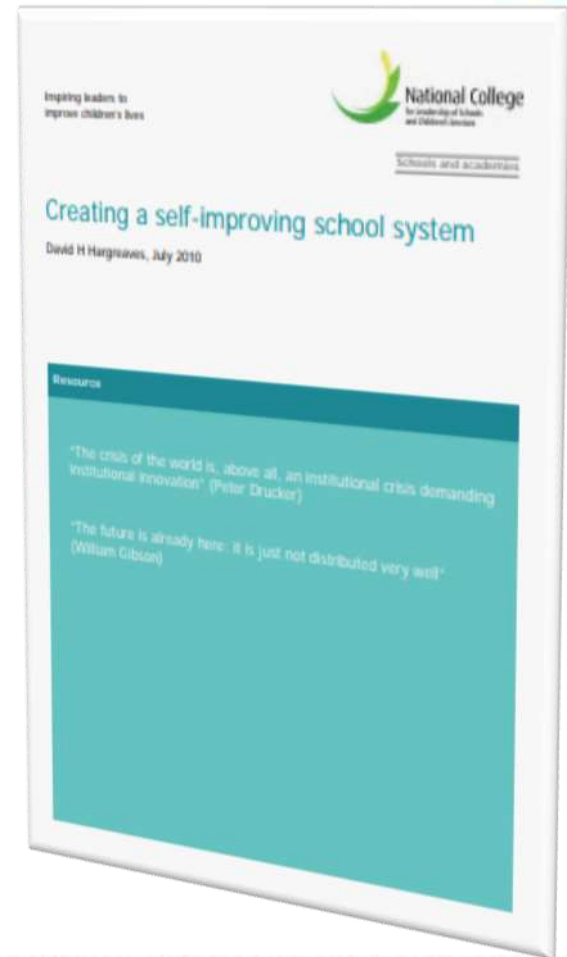
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“Mass localism depends on a different kind of support from government and a different approach to scale. Instead of assuming that the best solutions need to be determined, prescribed, driven or ‘authorised’ from the centre, policymakers should create more opportunities for communities to develop and deliver their own solutions and to learn from each other.”

Bunt and Harris, 2010, quoted in Hargreaves, 2010: 9



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“The Nuisance Who Worked Miracles.”

J.B Priestley on Margaret McMillan



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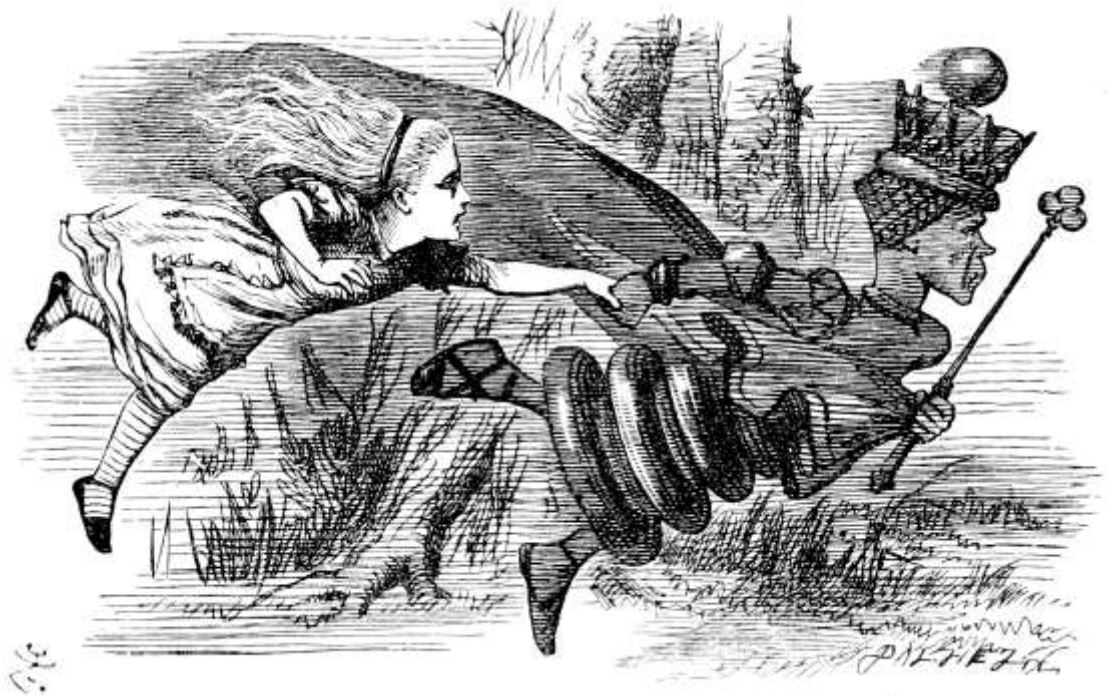

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The Red Queen

"Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you run very fast for a long time, as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!" said the Queen. "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"



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Find out more about Newham's Learning Without Limits Project



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<http://www.newhamnurseryschools.org.uk/>



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