



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Nadhim Zahawi MP
Parliamentary Undersecretary of State
Department for Education
Great Smith Street
SW1P 3BT

27th November 2018

Dear Nadhim

We are writing as officers of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes to bring to your attention three pieces of research that were recently presented to the APPG. I'm also attaching some testimonials from parents, about the impact maintained nursery schools have had on their families.

At the APPG meeting we heard from a number of speakers who took us through the research they have carried out about maintained nursery schools, their effectiveness, and what their loss would mean to localities. I am attaching copies of these reports for you and your officials, and hope that they prove useful in discussions with Ministerial colleagues ahead of, and during the upcoming Spending Review.

Hidden Value: A report exploring the role and future of maintained nursery schools in London¹

This report by London Councils reveals that many nursery schools face closure within the next two years unless the government takes urgent action. By collating findings from interviews with head teachers and leaders representing around a quarter of London's Maintained Nursery Schools, this research uncovers the hidden value of nursery schools, including the contribution they make to social mobility and the school readiness agenda by supporting some of London's most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

A recent London Councils survey found that maintained nursery schools in over a third of London boroughs may be threatened with closure if the government were to remove this additional investment, and the majority of head teachers interviewed as part of the research have warned that they will soon have to begin turning away pupils with complex needs unless more funding is secured. The report also identified funded 2 year olds as another key issue: "Provision for 2 year olds makes up 20 per cent of funded places provided by Maintained Nursery Schools in London, in comparison to 10 per cent for the average provider." This shows that nursery schools are critical to the delivery of the two year old offer, particularly given the low take up in London.

¹ https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Hidden%20Value_IM.pdf



To ensure that maintained nursery schools can continue to provide effective support for the most vulnerable children, London Councils recommends that the government implements a sustainable funding solution for maintained nursery schools, which acknowledges their status as schools, their higher costs, and the distinct role they play in the early years system.

Local Government Association Survey: Early Years Provision survey results 2018²

The LGA early years survey highlights the threat maintained nursery schools face unless government commits to an extra year of funding in 2020/21 as part of wider work to find a long-term sustainable funding solution in the Spending Review. They warn thousands of children with special needs could miss out on vital daily care and support unless the Government continues to provide extra funding for maintained nursery schools.

Maintained nursery schools play a significant role in providing care and support for more than 5,000 children with SEND, with qualified teachers designated as co-ordinators – something not required in other nursery provision.

Nearly two thirds of councils responding to the LGA survey – 61 per cent – fear maintained nursery schools in their area will close if this funding is not protected. More than half (52 per cent) also said that the loss of funding would mean reduced support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). There are currently 397 maintained nurseries in England with more than 40,980 children enrolled, of which 13.8 per cent have SEND. Only 6.3 per cent of 3 and 4-year-olds in the general population have SEND.

The LGA is calling on government to commit to continue this funding for an extra year in 2020/21 to help councils keep maintained nurseries open before a long-term sustainable funding solution is found as part of the Spending Review.

The ‘hidden’ benefits and true value of our local authority maintained nursery schools³

This report was put together by seven maintained nursery schools across Yorkshire and Lincolnshire to demonstrate the true impact of the maintained nursery sector, including the genuine cost savings and the hidden work they deliver, and to underscore the need to safeguard this high quality provision for the immediate and long-term well-being of children, their families and society as a whole.

The headline findings of this details report show that without the seven nursery schools, the annual cost to other public services, based on real-life case studies from the nurseries, for the following could be as much as:

- Social care safeguarding £256,068
- Health and well-being £216,000
- Special educational needs and disability £278,550
- Supplementing extended entitlement £480,016

As well as these significant costs to other public services, there would be the immediate displacement of hundreds of children, many with high needs, that are currently supported by the schools. These include:

- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): 125 children

² <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL%20Early%20Years%20Survey%20report.pdf>

³ <https://www.early-education.org.uk/sites/default/files/Nursery%20Schools%20-%20The%20hidden%20benefits.pdf>



- Educational Health Care Plans: 12 children
- Pre-threshold child protection: 63 children
- Child Protection Plan: 23 children
- Early help assessment: 34 children
- Early Years Pupil Premium: 104 children
- Looked after children: 11 children
- Two year old funded: 107 children
- Previously two year old funded: 140 children
- Extended entitlement (30 hours childcare): 304 children

We know that Education Ministers are personally committed to maintained nursery schools, but as the launch of the Spending Review is pushed back into the spring or even summer 2019, the situation our nursery schools find themselves in becomes ever more precarious.

As these reports show, without an extension of supplementary funding, it is difficult for schools and local authorities to plan for next year. Many nursery schools are already in budget deficit and this will get worse.

As such, we ask that you consider the findings of these reports, and ensure that transitional protection is extended until nursery schools can be given adequate funding as part of the Spending Review process.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Lucy Powell MP
Chair APPG Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes

William Wragg MP, Vice Chair
Jack Dromey MP, Secretary
Jess Phillips MP, Treasurer