

All Party Parliamentary Group on Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes

Campaign update June 2019: Secure the Future of Maintained Nursery Schools

A long-term sustainable funding solution for maintained nursery schools is now urgent. Three years of transitional arrangements under the Early Years National Funding Formula have tipped growing numbers of maintained nursery schools across the country into deficit, as costs rose while funding was capped. A continuation of the current system of supplementary funding would compound historic unfairness, with the level of funding a nursery school receives not being correlated to costs or need.

Thanks to the ongoing campaign effort, supplementary funding has been secured for maintained nursery schools until summer 2020. However, nursery schools are already under pressure from local authorities to budget for the possibility of losing supplementary funding after that time – on average a third of their total funding – because there is as yet no specific commitment from government about what funding will be available after that. That worst case scenario would lead to mass closures of nursery schools, removing the opportunity for high quality education and care from up to 40,000 children and families across the country, mainly in areas of deprivation where no similar provision would be available.

Ministers have committed to finding a long-term sustainable solution in the next spending review. The review is currently expected to take place in the autumn of 2019 to cover the next three years, but current political uncertainties mean that it could be delayed, downgraded to cover only one year, or there could be a rollover of current budgets for a further year. This must not be allowed to lead to delays in introducing a long-term funding solution for maintained nursery schools. The campaign between now and the autumn will therefore be focused on the following ask:

- A long-term viable funding formula for maintained nursery schools must be put in place from 2020 onwards that provides for the additional costs which maintained nursery schools face in relation to their statutory obligations including to employ a headteacher, qualified teachers and other staff on local authority pay scales
- The formula must take into account that maintained nursery schools are schools and in addition to the hourly rate under the EYNFF they should be entitled to school-based funding including a lump sum and premises components for reimbursement of business rates and PFI costs
- The formula must ensure that no maintained nursery school is worse off as a result of the new formula *[or that any cuts are capped and introduced gradually over at least a three-year period]*

The action needed now

Support the national launch of this phase of the campaign by attending the event in Birmingham on 21 June. Sign up here: <https://mnscampaignlaunch.eventbrite.co.uk/> (Also **save the date** of 27 September for the march of 5,000 Head Teachers on Downing Street – further details to follow.)

Promote the School Cuts petition on nursery funding – encourage governors, staff, families and local communities to sign the online petition to show their support: <http://bit.ly/nurserycuts>

Ask your MP to write to Damian Hinds to ask him to honour the commitment to putting in place a funding formula for maintained nursery schools that gives them a guarantee of viable funding for the future, instead of leaving them constantly fighting for survival

Engage with local councillors Encourage them to lobby their parties at national level to support the campaign, and to ensure that their local authority is supporting its nursery schools and putting them at the heart of its early years services. Ensure they understand the need to delay any decisions on restructuring or closing nursery schools until the new funding formula has been agreed.

Local media and social media - Invite in your local press, and send them stories about the unique role of maintained nursery schools, their exceptional quality of education, and how the current system of funding is putting that quality at risk. Use social media to spread the word too. Local Facebook groups of parents, current and past, can be very powerful.

Keep building the evidence – Nursery schools in Birmingham have now produced a report, following the lead of the NE Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Humberside nursery schools, and demonstrating the real, but often hidden, contribution maintained nursery schools make to delivering services to local families. Could you compile similar data for your own region or locality?

Key messages

The following are the key messages the campaign wants to put across:

- 1. Maintained nursery schools need a guarantee now that they will have viable funding after 2020, otherwise we will see a sudden spate of closures.**
Ministers have acknowledged that they need funding at a higher rate than other parts of the early years sector and have provided interim funding of £60m a year until 2019-20. A long-term solution must include a commitment to fund maintained nursery schools on the same basis as all other schools, including a lump sum to cover the statutory requirements which private and voluntary sector nurseries are not required to meet.
- 2. Maintained nursery schools are held to higher standards than private and voluntary sector nurseries** – they have to pay qualified teachers, have a headteacher, have admissions policies which prioritise the children in greatest need, and undergo more stringent Ofsted inspections. A funding formula which offers the same funding for different standards of provision is unfair, as well as unviable. The additional costs of maintained nursery schools are proportionate to their added value.

3. **Maintained nursery schools transform lives**, especially for some of our most disadvantaged children, because of the quality of education they offer. No other part of the early years sector has the same track record at helping disadvantaged children to catch up with their more advantaged peers. They contribute to government's social mobility objectives by doing so.
4. **They have a unique pool of expertise in supporting children with SEND** in the early years and helping those children access their entitlement to early years education, often taking children whom other settings do not have the resources or expertise to support
5. **The whole early years sector benefits from the expertise of maintained nursery schools** acting as catalysts to raise standards in their locality through supporting schools and early years settings to work together to improve their quality. As a national network, which includes 36 Early Years Teaching Schools, these hubs of expertise are a vital resource to draw on, especially as local authority early years services have been hugely cut back and are no longer able to provide the same level of training and support.

Further information

About the APPG: www.early-education.org.uk/all-party-parliamentary-group-nursery-schools-nursery-and-reception-classes

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School cuts nursery schools petition: <http://bit.ly/nurserycuts>