

Dear Justine,

Future of nursery schools

We are writing to you regarding the future of nursery schools, and the impact of the government's proposed changes to the early years funding formula.

The government has set out a number of important changes to early years funding, and we welcome the proposals to increase funding and to extend the provision of free early education and childcare provision to 30 hours a week.

However, plans to cut funding to nursery schools in two years' time are incredibly concerning for head teachers running those settings, for parents and children who rely on them, and for early years practitioners working in them. By just setting out funding plans for two years, nursery schools cannot plan long term and deliver the stability that parents and employees need.

We know that nursery schools deliver high quality early years education for children. Indeed, 100 per cent of nursery schools are now rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. We know that such schools deliver crucial support to some of the most disadvantaged pupils; 65 per cent of nursery school places are located in the 30 most deprived areas of the country.

Led by a head teacher, such settings have graduate level staff and professional early years practitioners who deliver high quality, focused early years education. They are required to meet the standards and regulations for schools as well as for early years provision. Nursery schools provide valuable training placements and CPD, boosting skills in the early years sector as a whole.

Nursery schools provide an efficient and cost-effective way to improve social mobility and to tackle the educational disadvantages many young children face. In your party conference speech in October you spoke passionately about improving social mobility, as both a moral objective of the government's, and as an essential part of making Britain economically successful. We agree. But the best way to do this is to invest in early years education, not to take money away from the highest quality part of the system.

We know that maintained nursery schools have higher fixed costs than other settings but their value is such that instead of closing nursery schools, we should be investing in them.

We ask you to think again about the proposals. Nursery schools require adequate, long term funding in order to continue to deliver the high standard of education children need. We know nursery schools work. It is time to invest in them.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary, ATL
James Bowen, director, NAHT Edge
Russell Hobby, general secretary, NAHT
Deborah Lawson, general secretary, Voice
Melian Mansfield, chair, Early Childhood Forum
Beatrice Merrick, chief executive, Early Education
Lucy Powell MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes
Dave Prentis, general secretary, UNISON
Tim Roache, general secretary, GMB