

Princess Elizabeth Nursery Parents Group
c/o Princess Elizabeth Nursery School
14 Clearburn Crescent
Edinburgh
EH16 5ER

10 DEC 2010

27th November 2010

Dear Gillian Tees

— EMS

Re: Proposal to close Princess Elizabeth Nursery School

We are writing to inform you that the parents of children attending Princess Elizabeth Nursery School are opposed to its closure.

At the outset, we would like to dispel the myth that our opposition to closure of the nursery is based on sentimental grounds. Rather the opposition is based on the high quality pre-school education which the nursery provides which we believe should continue to be made available to future generations.

We are aware that there are colossal budgetary pressures upon the Children and families department. However, we do not find the arguments in favour of closing the nursery substantial enough to warrant its closure. Our comments and queries relating to the proposal document are presented below.

The projected savings are not as substantial as the proposal suggests:

-Main savings are to be made are through staff costs...however, most of the staff will be re-deployed elsewhere so such savings will be minor (i.e. much less than £84k as this will only relate to those staff who are made redundant).

-There are projected building repairs and maintenance costs of £27k

The building is very solid and has been wind and watertight for the past five years (as proven by the nil spend on building works over the previous 5 years- section 3.5 of proposal document).

In the unlikely case that there were any pressing works (proposal states that due to limited budget availability, identified works would be restricted to those repairs required to keep the property wind and watertight and to ensure health and safety- section 3.6 of proposal document), then the £20k that would need to be made available for the one-off costs associated with closing the building (section 6.3. of proposal document) would surely cover these works.

-It is estimated that a further £17k is required to improve public access to the building

Can this be clarified? At the public meeting, we were informed that this constituted such things as signage within the nursery (why would laminated paper sheets not suffice?); emergency exiting (surely already in place for health and safety reasons?); accessible toilet.

Could the most pressing items not be covered within the £20k budgeted for closing down the building?

- Service cost savings of £8,635

We presume this means heating and lighting etc.

However, section 6.3 of the proposal states that the ongoing security costs prior to sale of the premises are estimated to be approx. £700 per month. Given the current economic climate and property market, this cost could be ongoing for the unforeseeable future.

The Children and Families Department Revenue Budget monitoring 2010/11 month six position reported in November 2010 clearly indicated existing budgetary pressures resulting from recurring security and utility costs relating to current surplus sites which already estimated at around £200k.

Would it be wise to add to these spiralling costs in the current climate?

By avoiding this un-necessary expense and keeping the nursery open, the £700 per month which would have been spent on security costs would virtually pay the monthly service costs of the nursery.

-Capital receipts from sale

The land and buildings have been valued by the estates department at £150,000 (section 6.2 of the proposal). Given that this is a sturdy, two storey building (with the equivalent of 12 rooms) which is located on a substantial piece of land, we dispute this valuation and request proof or an independent external valuation be performed.

We are sure that if the nursery property were sold on the open market (e.g. via ESPC), it would not sell for less than £400,000. A two bedroom flat adjacent to the nursery is valued in excess of £100,000.

Why would the cash-strapped Children and Families department be willing to sell the land and buildings for offers around £150,000?

Given that the main reason given for closure of the nursery is financial constraints, this would undermine the whole basis for closure. In addition, it would amount to underselling city assets and thus depriving the city of Edinburgh residents twice over. Firstly by de-commissioning a first-class nursery establishment and secondly by underselling the assets.

Realistically, there are not large savings to be made. In terms of debts, we could sell off every school in this country and our country would be no better off financially (feel free to prove this to be untrue). But as an uneducated society, we would be very poor indeed.

We would like to know what the NET financial benefits of closing the nursery actually are and ask if this a sum worthy of depriving future generations of the high standard of pre-school education that this nursery provides?

In addition, can you clarify the cost of this whole consultation exercise?

Proposal states that PENS only has a roll of 20 children however the nursery is not significantly under-occupied as is suggested

- The building capacity of the nursery is for 24 children (FTE)
- Staffing provision is only made for 20 children (FTE)

-20 children currently attend PENS, 2 more children will begin nursery in January followed by a further 2 children in April. Thus occupancy in the mornings will then be 100% according to staffing allocations.

-Staffing allocations for the afternoon session allow for 16 children and the occupancy varies between 57-80%.

Thus, the nursery is currently working at 80% occupancy in the mornings and upto 80% occupancy in the afternoons. School closures have historically been undertaken where occupancy has been well below 50%.

With the changing demographics there is increasing demand for early years provision, particularly within council-run establishments. Therefore, would it not make sense to preserve existing nursery school provision rather than contract the service?

Proposal states the nursery roll has been below 25 over the last 5 yrs

-This does not reflect the role of the department in exerting a downward pressure on numbers through

- i) a reduction in staff numbers which consequently limited the number places
- ii) changes to early years admission policy which reduced the number of children obtaining full-time places:

A number of children attending PENS presently and historically have had English as an additional language. Previously children were able to qualify for full time places for their EAL needs but criteria changed after 2007. This is detrimental in itself, as language difficulties which persist beyond the early years will impact negatively on their attainment.

iii) repeated threats of closure projecting the image that the future of the nursery was uncertain. This deterred parents from registering their children at the nursery:

One parent of a child here at PENS was not aware that PENS was to remain open following the 2007 closure attempt and enrolled [REDACTED] School nursery class. When she learned that the nursery was still operational, she immediately transferred her child to PENS in 2009, regardless of the fact that this was during the academic year. Having experienced the nursery provision at both PSNC and PENS, she states that the provision at PENS is far superior.

Similarly, we are aware of parents who are avoiding placing their children on the current waiting list for fear of closure.

Would the department deny that the three actions listed here were carried out?

-In addition, these numbers (roll below 25) do not take into account that there are and have always been parents who buy additional hours for their children. This must surely skew the figures (including costs per pupil) because these 'empty' places are generating money for the department.

Proposal states that the average cost per pupil is amongst the highest in the city

The difference in average cost per place at PENS compared with PSNC is around £1,500 according to the figures provided in section 3.8 of the proposal. A comparison of costs between PENS and CHNS shows them to be equivalent.

It has been stated in the proposal that increased provision at CHNS would lower the average cost. How much would the projected average cost per place then be?

Similarly, how much would the projected average cost per place at PSNC be following increased provision?

The care commission evaluation of PENS rated the nursery excellent both in terms of quality of care and support and the quality of the environment. However, evaluation of PSNC shows this nursery has not achieved the same level in standards. Given that PENS is a higher quality establishment than PSNC, the extra cost per place at that establishment should be justified.

Children are the future and the Scottish government is itself committed to increasing the number of pre-school centres receiving positive inspection reports. The reasoning behind this national indicator is given on the government website as such:

'It is well-documented that good quality pre-school education enhances children's development. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study has shown that high quality pre-school experiences lead to better intellectual and social/behavioural development and that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences. There are, however, significant differences between pre-school providers, and research shows that the quality of provision makes a significant difference to outcomes for children.'

Independent nursery schools such as PENS were scored as being higher quality providers of pre-school education more often than nursery classes within primary schools.

Many parents of children attending PENS (and of those who have done in the past) would testify to the significant difference that this high quality provision has made to their children's developmental outcomes. In terms of the national indicator then, Princess Elizabeth Nursery provides a high quality pre-school experience for the children and is already in receipt of positive inspection reports. Rather than closing such establishments, these should be heralded as centres of excellence in pre-school education and provide a reference point for other pre-school establishments.

HMIE guidance indicates: 'Where services are being reorganised, care should be taken not to weaken existing, effective provision, such as that found most often in nursery schools with teacher involvement, which are providing high-quality nursery education.'

What evidence can you provide to demonstrate that closing PENS, which is an effective provider of good quality pre-school education, does not weaken existing provision on a city-wide level (given that there are no local catchments for nurseries)?

Proposed staffing provision for an extra 15FTE places at CHNS and PSNC

Despite maintaining staff:child ratios, how would the department ensure that extra places would not place a greater burden on the standard of the pre-school experience provided by CHNS and PSNC?

This is a particular concern for PSNC given that they have not been able to attain the standards awarded to PENS and CHNS despite operating at 45% of the building occupancy (2010/11 provision capped at 18FTE out of an available 40FTE).

As the proposal states, there would still be spare capacity for future growth.

There is concern that a near 50% increase in provision at PSNC (from 18FTE to 28FTE places) would place a burden on the establishment making it difficult for them to maintain current standards let alone exceed them to meet those attained by PENS and CHNS.

What procedures will ensure that standards are maintained at the proposed receiving schools?

Given that the demand upon early years provision is increasing, what procedures will ensure that PSNC improves upon current standards, becoming a more effective provider of pre-school education and thus capable of expansion to the full capacity without detriment as and when required?

Proposal states that there is parental preference to increase provision at PSNC rather than provide places at PENS

While this reflects a survey of PSNC parents, it is unfair to place these parents wishes ahead of the wishes of the parents whose children attend PENS.

Has there been some sort of referendum on this which PENS parents were not informed about? How many PS parents have exerted pressure in this matter?

Does the pressure we are exerting in opposing withdrawal of places at PENS count?

We were not informed of the possibility of being able to apply parental pressure for places at PENS or indeed any other nursery!

When and how many parents from Prestonfield Primary School requested that the provision of places be increased at PSNC?

Why is it not possible to retain PENS and increase provision slightly at PSNC to accommodate those children whose parents request this?

Proposal states that it is envisaged that only 6 children will be returning for 2011/2012 session

These numbers do not take into account the younger siblings of children currently attending PENS but who will turn 3 in the course of the 2011/2012 session.

In addition, the nature of the PENS school roll has been such that while in some years a large number of children move on to primary school, there are alternate years when there are many who stay on. Despite the fact that there has not been a long waiting list for some years now, and the roll can be low at the start of the year, the nursery has always reached near full occupancy by the end of the year.

A number of factors influence this matter, including the fact that children are only allowed to start the nursery the term after their third birthday. In addition, the Prestonfield area is popular with families who arrive from overseas to study at universities in Edinburgh. Since the academic year starts after August, a number of these children arrive at the nursery later on in the term.

Proposal states that two council-run nurseries and two private nurseries lie within 400m of PENS

The council manages 95 pre-school centres across the city. The department states that parents of PENS children have a choice of two other council nurseries and two private nurseries within 400m of PENS.

Nursery schools do not have local catchment areas and therefore parents who made the choice to send their children to PENS did so by choosing this single nursery out of the 95 nurseries the council operates. Private nurseries do not employ trained teachers and the service they provide is not what all parents desire for their children. We therefore made the choice for our children to receive their pre-school education at a local authority establishment over a private nursery as we feel that private nurseries are more suited to childcare provision as opposed to pre-school education. We have a number of parents who have in the past used private nurseries for their children but for the pre-school years have chosen for their children to attend council-run nurseries. The department has also put forward the argument (at the public meeting) that parents would still have the choice of two local authority nurseries in the area that they can send their children to. This fails to acknowledge the fact that more than 75% of the children who attend PENS live outwith the Prestonfield area. While choosing to close PENS, how is the department able to justify removing the free choice which parents had exercised in placing their children at PENS? In particular, how is it possible to circumvent parental preference given the statutory duty imposed upon authorities to educate the pupils in accordance with the wishes of their parents (as outlined in the excerpt from the SISS Act 2000 below)?

Scottish Executive documentation

STANDARDS IN SCOTLAND'S SCHOOLS ETC ACT 2000 SECTION 34: GUIDANCE ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Delivery of Pre-School Education

Responding to parental preferences

4.6 Authorities will be aware that Section 43 of the 2000 Act removes pre-school education from the system of placing requests which applies to primary and secondary schools under their management. However, the general duty of authorities to educate pupils in accordance with the wishes of their parents remains (contained in Section 28 of the 1980 Act).

4.7 A key aspect of this responsiveness relates to the placement of children in particular centres. Given the way the duty on authorities and the power available to authorities are framed in the 2000 Act (in terms of 'securing' rather than 'providing' services), parents will have a reasonable expectation not only that authorities will secure a numerical sufficiency of places but also that these places will as far as possible reflect parental preferences – including, where appropriate, preferences for centres outwith their own area and for non-local authority centres within their own area. In exercising their pre-school education functions, authorities should ensure that any restrictions on choice are explained and justified by reference to clear admissions policies.

Proposal states that Princess Elizabeth Nursery school is rated 'poor' in terms of suitability due to its upper floor location and access to the outdoor play area via external stairs

Why has this building suddenly become less suited for use as a nursery, given that the upper floor has been functioning as a nursery for 80yrs?

Parents find no issue with accessing the nursery via external stairs. Many families live in homes which have stairs either internally or externally. Indeed, the world we live in is such that we have to climb stairs now and then. Therefore, for those who live in homes without stairs, they appreciate the opportunity this presents for their children to learn how to ascend and descend stairs safely. Health promotion encourages us to take the stairs instead of lifts for physical well-being, thus our children receive health benefits from use of the stairs.

For many who live in apartment blocks, gardens are commonly accessed by descending staircases. The fact that the garden is accessed by external stairs does not reduce the opportunities our children have for enjoying the beautiful outdoor space. As with the proposed receiving nurseries, children will always require supervised access to the outdoor spaces, regardless of whether these spaces are directly or indirectly accessible.

The nursery building is located in beautiful surroundings. The large front garden is complete with massive trees which allow children to observe the changing seasons

quite blatantly. The nursery takes advantage of its upper floor location by setting up binoculars in the classroom where the children are able to look at birds feeding at the bird-table on the balcony and in the trees beyond. They use the extensive rear play-garden to learn about seasons, carry out environmental initiatives (such as making a water butt collecting channel from plastic bottles), gardening as well as more physical activities such as playing in the mini-maze and sand-pit, or on the climbing frame and bikes. The benefits of having the kind of garden that many of us can only dream of for our children, more than makes up for any disadvantage access via external stairs may bring.

Parents also find accessing PENS with buggies easier than at CHNS. At that nursery there is a sloping path leading up to the nursery gate from street level which has integrated steps and is very difficult to manage for some parents with buggies. This has been stated as a reason for not considering CHNS when choosing nursery schools.

Proposal states nursery class within primary school offers benefits in terms of an easier transition to primary school for those children that stay on to attend Prestonfield Primary School

While this may be true, very few children attending PENS later go on to attend Prestonfield Primary School. Therefore, the children who attend PENS would not all benefit from attending PSNC instead.

Proposal states nursery pupils at Prestonfield have the opportunity to access facilities at the school on a timetabled basis such as the gym and computer facilities

PENS pupils have access to computer facilities at all times as there is a computer in the classroom. PENS make excellent use of the nearby Cameron House Community Centre facilities twice weekly. Here, the children also benefit from a programme of Enjoy-A-Ball sports coaching during the summer term where they have the opportunity to develop a range of skills. The children look forward to being out in the community and also learn how they should behave when out as a group during the walk back to the nursery.

Since the children who attend PENS are from a wide range of backgrounds, the staff have always capitalised on this as an opportunity to help our children develop an awareness and understanding of the diversity which exists in the world around us. The children at the nursery celebrate a range of festivals together and we as parents appreciate the effect this has in helping everyone get along with one another and ensuring each individual is valued and accepted no matter what their background.

PENS staff excel at providing early years education to children who have English as an additional language. Some children come to the nursery speaking little English, but the experienced staff provide gentle instruction and support in the learning of English as a foreign language.

The nursery classroom is bright and inviting. Even younger siblings find it hard to leave when they come to drop off their brother/sister. By the time their turn comes to attend PENS, they are more than happy to be left there as they have become so familiar with the place!

The room is divided into different areas to stimulate the children's interest. For example, a dressing up area, a reading corner, construction play, music and dancing area, craft, sand and water play areas. The children are able to do their own thing as well as take part in more structured activities, all with the unobtrusive but gentle support of the excellent staff. The children are learning without even being aware of it, because of the specialised knowledge of the staff.

Children at PENS also enjoy additional educational benefits. For example, PENS staff help to involve us in our children's learning through the weekly lending library and the Maths Sacks which enable us to engage with our children through reading books and the counting games.

One of the staff members has also been running a PEEP learning together programme for parents and their children, which is now in its second year at PENS. This has been a wonderful opportunity for us to learn how we can best support our children's learning and development in the home environment.

If the nursery is closed, will there be this level of support for parents in encouraging them to take an active role in their children's education at receiving nurseries?

Surplus capacity

It was stated at the public meeting that one of the reasons for closing PENS is due to the surplus capacity which exists in the vicinity and that PENS has limited capacity to cope with possible future needs.

To meet any increase in demand for places at PENS beyond the current building capacity, would it not be possible to utilise the lower floor of the nursery?

As parents who know of the benefits to children of being part of a small nursery establishment, we are concerned about what standard of pre-school education a child might receive in a nursery as large as PSNC has the potential to be.

In terms of surplus capacity at PSNC, what would be the educational benefits to a child of attending a nursery with upto 40 children present at a time where it might be difficult for all staff members to get to know and respond to each child's individual needs?

How would staff members who operate a nursery with upto 80 children on the school roll (as is the capacity at PSNC) develop a good understanding of each child's individual needs?

How do we know that once PENS closes, CHNS will not be up for closure in the coming future with all children being sent to PSNC instead?

Historically, Princess Elizabeth Nursery is one of the oldest pre-school establishments in Edinburgh and has an excellent reputation. Since its inception in 1930, it has taken a child-centred approach to the education of pre-school children and to this day has remained committed to this aim.

We would like to conclude with a quote from the Scottish Government's vision of the early years – 'that children should be valued and provided for within communities; the importance of strong, sensitive relationships with parents and carers; the right to a high quality of life and access to play; the need to put children at the centre of service delivery; to provide more support through universal services when children need it; and that children should be able to achieve positive outcomes irrespective of race, disability or social background.'

As parents of children who attend PENS, we sincerely believe that this vision is being fulfilled at PENS. We hope to encourage you to build upon the foundations that have been laid at this establishment and not destroy them.

We look forward to your response to our comments and queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Princess Elizabeth Nursery Parents Group

Topic: Closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School.

PETITION

We as parents or guardians of children who attend Princess Elizabeth Nursery School who would like the nursery school to be left open for the benefit of our children and the community could you please sign this petition. A.S.P. Thank you for reading this; a concerned parent.

SIGNATURES

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
STEPHEN SPENCE Jenny Y Hu	9 ALLWAY LOAN 38/5 ochiltree Garden	S. Spence Jenny Y Hu
KERRY Robb.	22. PRESTONFIELD RD.	K. Robb
Ruben Casntekin	7 Kirkhill Drive	Ruben
Uzma Tufail-Khanif TERESA STEPHEN	42 Upper Craigour 32 CAMERON TOLL GARDENS	Uzma Teresa Stephen
HASAN ALZASMARI	68 Craigour Crescent,	Hasan
Richard W J Hu	40 Burnlie house drive	Richard W J Hu
Mai ALI-Albashir	411 Sycamore house	Mai
JULIE LEE	77 CARNBEE PARK	Julie Lee
COLIN LEE		Colin Lee
Tracy Wilkinson	1 Fiddrie mill Place	T. Wilkinson
WISSAM	Djeonane	Wissam
Gillian Glasgow	25 Clearburn Crescent	G. Glasgow

Topic: Closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School.

PETITION

We as parents or guardians of children who attend Princess Elizabeth Nursery School who would like the nursery school to be left open for the benefit of our children and the community could you please sign this petition. A.S.P. Thank you for reading this; a concerned parent.

SIGNATURES

NAME	ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
Donald Stephen	32 Cameron Toll Gdns	D. Stephen
N. Harkin's	14/5 Loganlea Terrace	N. Harkin's
T. DAILY	29 PRESTONFIELD RD.	T. Dailly
LI HO	59 NETHERBANK	Li Ho
MARI CHAN	23 GUARDWELL CRES.	Mari Chan
TONY CHAN		T. Chan
C. Willinson	14 a Niddrie Mill	C. Willinson
I. Hanif	42 Upper Cres Craigour	I. Hanif

Subject: FW: Proposed closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School

From: Alice.Ednie@scottish.parliament.uk [mailto:Alice.Ednie@scottish.parliament.uk] **On Behalf Of**
george.foulkes.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Sent: 08 December 2010 12:54

To: Marilyne MacLaren

Subject: Proposed closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School

Dear Ms MacLaren

I have received a further email from a constituent with regard to the proposed closure of **Princess Elizabeth Nursery School**. His concerns have been outlined in some detail and the following is an extract from his email:

..... the council is keen to close Princess Elizabeth Nursery School in order to make some financial savings. The projected savings are not substantial and are most likely undeliverable. For example, the main savings they suggest are to be made are through staff costs. However, most of the staff will be re-deployed elsewhere so such savings will be minor. There are projected building repairs and maintenance costs which would easily be covered by the one-off costs of shutting down the building. The service costs of the nursery can be covered by the monthly security costs which would need to be paid until the premises were sold (which in the current climate, could be for the unforeseeable future). Thus, the financial benefits of closing the nursery would be unworthy of depriving future generations of the high quality pre-school education that this nursery provides.

Children are the future and the Scottish Government is itself committed to increasing the number of pre-school centres receiving positive inspection reports. The reasoning behind this national indicator is given on the government website as: "It is well-documented that good quality pre-school education enhances children's development. The Effective Provision of pre-school education (EPPE) study has shown that high quality pre-school experiences lead to better intellectual and social/behavioural development and that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences. There are, however, significant differences between pre-school providers and research shows that the quality of provision makes a significant difference to outcomes for children."

In terms of quality of provision, Princess Elizabeth Nursery provides a high quality pre-school experience for the children and is already in receipt of positive inspection reports. Rather than closing such establishments, these should be heralded as centres of excellence in pre-school education and provide a reference point for sub-standard establishments.

Historically, Princess Elizabeth Nursery is one of the oldest pre-school establishments in Edinburgh and has an excellent reputation. Since its inception, it has taken a child-centred approach to the education of pre-school children and to this day has remained committed to this aim.....

Where so many committed individuals worked hard to voluntarily deliver this pre-school establishment to children in Edinburgh since 1930, I would have imagined that the gifting of this nursery to the Education Department in 1974 would have been with the condition that it continued to deliver pre-school education to children Edinburgh.

As stated in previous correspondence, pre-school education is extremely important and the increasing evidence shows that it is the early years which determine people's lives.

In light of the above, I am deeply concerned about the proposed closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School and request that any decision of closure be reconsidered.

I look forward to hearing from you.

George Foulkes MSP

Member for the Lothians

* * * * *

Alice Ednie

Administrator

George Foulkes MSP

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

www.georgefoulkesmsp.com

www.youtube.com/georgefoulkes

(0131) 348 6827

07890 490706

* * * * *

For latest news and information about all aspects of Parliamentary business, MSPs and our work, visit the Parliament's website at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/>.

For information about how you can visit the Parliament, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/visitingHolyrood/index.htm>.

Watch Parliamentary business live at <http://www.holyrood.tv/>

The information in this e-mail transmission and any files or attachments transmitted with it are strictly confidential and may contain privileged information. It is intended solely for the person or organisation to whom it is addressed and if you are not the intended recipient, you must not copy, distribute, disclose or take any action in reliance on it. If you have received this e-mail in error, please delete it from your computer system and notify the sender as soon as possible.

While this e-mail message and attachments have been swept by the content filter software for the presence of computer viruses, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body does not guarantee that either are virus-free and accepts no liability for damage sustained as a result of a virus. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that the onward transmission, opening or use of this message and any attachments will not adversely affect their systems or data or otherwise incur liability in law."

29th November 2010

Ms Gillian Tee
The City of Edinburgh Council
Director of Children and Families Department

- 3 DEC 2010

Ref: Proposal for closure of Princes Elizabeth Nursery

Dear Ms Tee,

I am writing to express my **total disagreement** with the proposal for closing Princess Elizabeth Nursery.

As a parent and teacher, I strongly believe that **a valuable institution which offers very high educational standards to our children should not be closed**.

There is no valid justification for such a measure. Princess Elizabeth has been offering a valued educational service to the community of Prestonfield and surrounding areas for **eighty years**.

I am a parent of three children, two of them now in primary school who attended this nursery. My youngest child is currently attending Princess Elizabeth Nursery and is very happy and satisfied. The attention from the teachers and nursery nurses and assistants is second to none. I also feel that Princess Elizabeth is a unique nursery architecturally, providing a warm, naturally lit indoor learning space with an extra special garden providing both play area and green / garden space. I feel that Princess Elizabeth Nursery is a jewel in the crown. I would not throw away the community jewels!

Yours Sincerely

P.E.

MTT 5242
13/12/10
SK.

10 DEC 2010

Dear Mrs Tee

→ EYS

I am writing to oppose your proposal to close Princess Elizabeth Nursery School. I feel that to close one of Edinburgh's longest established pre-school establishments would be a great injustice to the residents of Edinburgh City. The nursery offers a high quality pre-school experience which would be invaluable to many vulnerable or disadvantaged children. This may come at increased cost, but it fulfils needs which could not be met at larger nurseries or private nurseries where standards are not as high as they are at Princess Elizabeth Nursery.

Both of my sons have had the privilege of attending PENS and have benefited greatly from the expertise of the nursery staff and the warm, nurturing environment that exists at the nursery. My view of the nursery is upheld by the care commission reports which rate both the quality of care and support as well as the quality of the environment as excellent. I oppose the proposal that children who would attend PENS can attend Prestonfield Primary Nursery Class where there is a reduction in standards. Whilst there is spare capacity at PSNC, how would the nursery be able to maintain its already lower standards with an increase in the number of children let alone raise its standards to meet or exceed those which exist at PENS? I am fully aware that there would be an increase in staff numbers to maintain child to staff ratios. However, it is unclear what procedures would be put in place to ensure that an increase in numbers at PSNC would not place a burden on the standards. If PSNC has been unable to reach the high standards equivalent to those at PENS despite having fewer children in attendance than is proposed, how can you ensure they would be able to achieve these in future? I know first-hand what a difference a high quality pre-school establishment can make to the future of those children who attend such nurseries as PENS and would insist that such centres of excellence are to be cherished and should not perish.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During this time, my eldest son was lucky enough to attend PENS [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] His time at PENS provided him the essential stability and continuity he required during these uncertain times. The staff was fully aware of the situation at home and always considerate of his needs. For instance, it was normally difficult for me to be able to spend time with him on activities which would help his intellectual development. However, the nursery had a library system which

meant my son could choose and bring home a book which we could share together. In addition, he would also get to bring home a different maths sack each week which meant I was able to play with him whilst helping him to develop counting skills. Small activities which many can take for granted but for others can be difficult to make a part of normal home life.

Since the nursery is small, the staff are all able to get to know the individual needs of each child. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Had my son attended a private nursery, there would have been no access or referral to such services.

One of the great strengths of the staff is that they develop close relationships with the families of children attending the nursery. Without a doubt, I felt it was essential for my younger son to attend PENS as well. As his older brother had attended the nursery, he had already become familiar with the staff and the environment. [REDACTED]

The nursery staff were outstanding in helping us to manage these issues. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The staff were able to do this because of the relationship that each member was able to form with my child. In larger nurseries, or where there is a high turnover of staff such as private nurseries, such relationships are harder to form. And with young children time is of the essence. [REDACTED]

My son had attended a private nursery for a short time before he became eligible for free nursery education. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. This translates into physical, psychological and intellectual benefits for my child. If one considers the long term costs of not helping vulnerable children to reach their developmental potential, it is surely better to spend a little more during these crucial early years than spend a lifetime patching things up when the cracks start to show as disadvantaged children grow up. This view is supported by the economic case set out by Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman which shows that the rate of economic return on early years investment is significantly higher than for any other stage in the education system.

The pre-school experience that each of my boys received at PENS was unique for each of them. Yet, that each child who attends PENS receives such an experience is also unique. One would be hard pushed to find such high quality pre-school experiences being provided by all pre-school centres. All nurseries are clearly not the same and so it is not just about providing places by number, but also about providing quality places. By developing the confidence to do 'little' things like eat properly or finish a task, both of my boys have gained the confidence and ability to learn more effectively. Had these 'little' issues not been dealt with, neither of them would have been able to make the progress they have been able to make in life. The reality is that our primary school teachers don't have the time to handle dysfunctional behaviour. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] If children are provided with a high quality pre-school education, they will be better placed to become effective learners and contributors in the primary school setting. Whilst all children may not need the close attention and benefits obtained through attending a small nursery such as PENS, for other children it can be vital. I would urge you not to remove this facility which excels at providing effective support and early intervention to ensure positive outcomes for our children.

The UK based Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study has shown that high quality pre-school experiences lead to better intellectual and social/behavioural development and that disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences. In this study, independent nursery schools such as PENS scored^x higher in terms of pre-school quality than nursery classes within primary schools. Children from these high quality pre-school establishments showed less worried/anti-social behaviour by the time they went to school and made better intellectual progress. The quality of the staff child interactions also had a positive impact on this score such that, where staff showed warmth and were responsive to the individual needs of children, the children showed better social behavioural outcomes. Such interactions are a clear and established practice within PENS.

The quality of a pre-school centre was also found to be positively related to the qualification level of the staff. The higher the qualification of the staff, particularly the manager of the centre, the more progress the children made. Independent nursery schools thus score higher in this respect as they are managed by a head-teacher who is not only a trained teacher but often an early years specialist. Rather than point parents in the direction of private nurseries where trained teachers are not employed (appendix 1 of the proposal), the Children and Families department should therefore be keen to retain their valuable assets in the form of independent nursery schools. While they may carry additional costs as a result of their independence, this should not justify their closure

since they are providing value for money in the form of high quality pre-school experiences.

Princess Elizabeth Nursery School was established in 1930 by a charitable trust to provide pre-school education of a high standard. Eighty years later, this establishment continues to provide a high quality pre-school experience which should be retained for the benefit of future generations. To close the nursery would be quite an insult to the charitable trust that gifted this historic institution to the department only 36 yrs ago. It would also be a shame on the department for depriving the City of Edinburgh of one its greatest assets for a paltry price.

Yours Sincerely

Elaine Mill

From:

Sent:

To:

Cc:

Subject:

Follow Up Flag:

Flag Status:

To whom it may concern,

It was with deep disappointment that I learnt of the proposed closure of Princess Elizabeth Nursery School, having my daughter been an attendee there term [REDACTED]

My daughter attended a variety of nurseries across the city during the first 4-5 years of her life as I continued my education. Princess Elizabeth Nursery School (PENS) by far exceeded my expectations and clearly highlighted the short comings of previous nurseries.

For example, PENS exploration of the cultures within the broad mixture of ethnic backgrounds of the children at PEN was a new and enjoyable experience for my daughter. Socially it helped her a lot in her transition from nursery to school as she had developed a greater awareness and understanding of diversity.

I further found the outdoor trips to be not only educational, but also a fantastic way of teaching my daughter the rules of society. I recall how excited she was after a trip to Musselburgh on the train and the long explanation of how you pay to get on a bus. I believe that the socialization is also important for children to grow into independent and confident individuals who are able to contribute positively to society. This was also re-enforced by a cafe that the children opened one morning. This activity was completely initiated by the children themselves and so the children were allowed to make all the choices of what to do: they organised what to sell in their cafe, what time it would open and such like. These types of high quality learning experiences are not commonplace within all pre-school centres, and certainly were not evident within any of the nursery establishments my daughter previously attended.

PENS provided from my opinion, the best education that my daughter had up to this point in her life. This may contribute to the 'excellent' review given by the Care Commission. This is in contrast to private nurseries which cost a lot more yet deliver a lot less. One of the worst points made in the proposals paper is that people can choose to go to private nurseries.....but not everyone can afford this and this could lead to some children missing out on essential pre-school education. It also can cause a huge financial strain on families if they do choose....and how can it be justified that families bear this burden for a lesser quality of service?

It would be fair to suggest that the remaining nurseries where the children are expected to go, Cameron House and Prestonfield, may feel a strain whilst accommodating a larger number of children . This may inevitably lead to a lesser standard of education for all children attending. It is a grave concern of mine that the saving of £90,000 a year

08/12/2010

will result in a consequence of a poorer quality of care and education.

PENS staff are clearly all dedicated as demonstrated by having a low staff turn over and a long working history in the establishment. The staff and children alike do not take for granted the luxury that PEN is a smaller nursery but I believe this is one of the great strengths of the nursery. Problems and difficulties, and indeed extra needs can be identified at an early stage allowing staff and parents to work together to resolve these. From a child's point of view, isn't it better that these are caught at the earliest stage possible?

PENS promote education, independence, diversity and socialisation over and above childcare. It would be an incredible loss to the community if it were to close due to the lack of funding which is minute if you compare it to the cost of other Edinburgh ventures such as the trams.

In conclusion I feel that although the gaps in Council funds need to be rectified, taking the funding from Princess Elizabeth Nursery School is not the solution. This is a short term solution to a long term problem and worst of all, to the detriment of our children's future.

Yours Sincerely,

Gillian Tee
Director of Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council
Council Headquarters
Waverley Court,
Level 1:4,
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh EH8 8BG

As a 'Concerned Parent' of the 'High School Yards Nursery School Parents & Workers Association', I am writing as an individual & as part of the unanimous body, inclusive of all parents/guardians of children attending High School Yards Nursery School who are unanimously opposed to the proposed closure. Following several meetings convened by parents/guardians of children attending High School Yards Nursery School, the deputation to the Education Committee and the public meeting of 9th November, we have endeavoured to confirm and here reaffirm our/my views listed below;

- a) A recent Care Commission inspection resulted in two "Excellent" outcomes for High School Yards Nursery School. It is not in the best interests of the attending children that the nursery school is closed. However, in the event that a closure is insisted upon, we note here that it is preferable that the Royal Mile Primary School nursery class is closed in this event, and revenue saved from this closure is allocated to High School Yards Nursery to support its continued success.
- b) *HMle report for Royal Mile Primary School (2.6) published on 26/01/2010 evaluated Royal Mile Primary School using How Good is Our School and Child at the Centre as:*
 - *Improvements in Performance (1.1) –weak*
 - *Learners' Experiences (2.1) –weak*
 - *Meeting Learners' Needs (5.3)- weak*
 - *Nursery class only –Improvements in Performance (1.1)-good*
 - *Nursery class only- Children's Experiences (2.1) -very good*
 - *Nursery class only – Meeting Learners' Needs -(5.3) very good*
 - *Primary and nursery class together: The curriculum (5.1)-weak*
 - *Primary and nursery class together: Improvement through Self-Evaluation (5.9)- weak*

On the six point scale from How Good is Your School and Child at the Centre, weak means "important weaknesses" and is evaluated at a level.2 out of six levels, ranging from excellent (6) to unsatisfactory (1)
- c) Also of particular importance on this issue is that an expert submission was made at the public meeting of 9th November 2010 stating that an independent nursery school is preferable to a nursery class attached to the Primary School.
- d) Regarding capacity, the proposal provided does not clearly note and distinguish the difference between capacity of the nursery school building as opposed to capacity and ratio of staff to children attending, these are distinct considerations.
- e) Regarding the capacity and ratio of staff to children attending, we must note that the nursery did previously provide the option to of wrap around time (in support of children and families with full day work commitments), but provision of such an option from senior management was on the

- condition that the qualified staff provision would not have a full time contract (contract was reviewed more once per year) and an unsustainable hourly rate of £8 per hour was offered. Consequently the nursery was not supported by senior management to attract families with full day work commitments (ie: particularly during late afternoons because wrap around time provision was discontinued).
- f) Regarding the proposals claim "to remove surplus capacity – we note communication from and to Mr Mike Rosendale, Head of Neighbourhood Services, City of Edinburgh Council in early 2008 which cites evidence that during session 2007/08 nursery schools within CEC were not allowed to admit children into vacant nursery places even although head teachers had sufficient staffing and capacity to do so. It must be emphasised that this limitation resulted in turning away paying families and limiting other placements.
 - g) Concerning reductions of staff from senior management dating back to 2007. It must be noted that when members of staff are removed from a service it restricts the number of children who can be enrolled so looks like "surplus capacity". Children and families have simply been turned away when staff have been working to full capacity.
 - h) At each of the several parents association meetings, the deputation to the Education Committee and the public meeting of 9th November, we have raised and emphasised that the claims made in the proposal of saving are not accurate and correct because redeployment of salaries within the estate rather than closing those employment posts is simply not a saving.
 - i) The High School Yards Nursery School building was purchased for an amount of £70,000 in 1993 from the University of Edinburgh. If the building is not to be used as a nursery school it is proposed that £40,000 will be spent to board the premises and disconnect utilities. The building is currently secured for an essential community service and we view this as social wealth. Within the rationalisation program of 2007 it is stated that a 25% increase demand for early years education over a stated period, with only 1% allocated to council nurseries. We note that the lack of support from council senior management to provide wrap around time (see above), reduction of staff, withholding maintenance costs (other than essential costs) has influenced this outcome. In the event of increased demand for council funded early years provision – the closure of High School Yards Nursery School would result in a significant cost to the city, as opposed to the saving which has been suggested here.
 - j) We note that the press announced that High School Yards Nursery School is facing closure on 27th September 2010. Within the same week the University of Edinburgh announced through the press that the premises next to High School Yards Nursery School has been earmarked to be used for a new facility. We note here our concern of lack of transparency that the High School Yards Nursery School premises may be utilised in connection with the new facility planned by the Edinburgh University. Such a situation would be highly improper.
 - k) The proposal refers to maintenance costs amounting to £36,000 over five years. It should be noted that it has been determined at the consultation on 9th November, that this is a generic amount not a factual amount. To correct this it should be noted that only funding for essential maintenance has been provided since 2007. The proposal is misleading in this regard.

Further to the above, we note that a minute of the consultation of 9th November has not been received or published.

Please provide a written response to the above listed items.

Parent,

Sent: 06 December 2010 22:11

To: Early Years

Subject: FAO Director of Children and Families - re: proposed closure of High School Yards.

Dear Ms Tee,

I am writing to you as a parent of a child who presently attends High School Yards Nursery School. I am deeply concerned by the proposal to close HSY and I am passionately opposed to any such action. I have a long association with HSY: my son attended [REDACTED] and now my [REDACTED] daughter attends. I hold HSY and its staff in such high esteem that after I have dropped my son off at school I walk past two council-run nurseries (one of which has been named as a proposed receiving nursery) to take my daughter to HSY. HSY is unique and should be celebrated as a jewel in the education department's crown, not discarded and closed down. The staff at HSY should be receiving recognition for the brilliant work they do, but instead they are being threatened with closure. How disheartening that a group of such dedicated people who work so well together and obviously love what they do are not valued. HSY and its staff have had such a positive impact on so many young lives and given the chance can continue to do so.

Although alternative places will be offered elsewhere if the closure goes ahead, I would like to stress that if I wanted my daughter to attend either of the alternative nurseries or any other local nurseries I would not have sent her to HSY. I very carefully chose HSY for both my son and my daughter. The welcoming atmosphere and stimulating environment at HSY ensured that out of the three nurseries we visited with my son, HSY was the only nursery my son did not want to leave when our visit came to an end.

HSY, apart from being a wonderful nursery, also has a wider function within the local community. The Sure Start group for under 3s played an extremely important role for me and my daughter [REDACTED] when my son started HSY nursery. Like many of the children who attend the Sure Start group, my daughter has been in the very fortunate position of starting nursery in an environment that she has known most of her life with people (children and staff) she has known most of her life. It is an environment she loves and one in which she has flourished and continues to do so. My daughter's confidence, sociability and overall happiness and well being have undoubtedly been enhanced by this experience. This is the experience I would wish for every child and if the Dept for Children and Families is 'COMPLETELY committed to early years and nursery provision' then it should be there wish too.

I feel so strongly about the possible closure because I know that it is NOT in the best interests of my daughter or any of the children who attend the nursery. HSY has been such an integral part of my daughter's life from infancy that I know uprooting her from there and placing her in an unfamiliar environment will not be beneficial on any level and I am deeply concerned that it will have a negative impact on her.

I chose to send both of my children to HSY because of the whole package: the staff, the high quality of experiences offered to the children in all aspects of development and learning (as mentioned in HMI report), the atmosphere, the bright interior, the wonderful wildlife garden and interior courtyard that offer children the chance to get close to nature. It all comes together so beautifully and once lost it will be gone forever. That would be a tragedy.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

Yours sincerely

From: ...
 Sent: 14 December 2010 11:32
 To: Early Years
 Subject: KEEP High School Yards Nursery OPEN

To Whom It May Concern,

7 Dec 2010

I wish to voice a strong opposition to the closing of High School Yards Nursery. [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

My family and I specifically took into account the High School Yards nursery (and a choice of other nurseries), as a significant reason to relocate into the Old Towne area. Ironically, we were actually advised against relocating into the Old Towne area (and our present address), as the professional relocation specialist said she would advise against families relocating into this area due to the high student population and lack of family friendly amenities.

While we do not pretend to be experts on the Scottish / Edinburgh political or economic systems, we can tell you from personal experience (within the U.S), that the agenda of cutting social services within the so called "downtown" areas of U.S. cities, as a budgetary / austerity savings measure, has resulted in dire consequences for those cities taking this approach. THE MINOR COST SAVINGS ACHIEVED WAS DWARFED BY THE LOSS OF REVENUE DUE TO FAMILIES MIRGRATING TO LIVE IN THE SUBURBS.

The reason for this reversal of fortune within U.S. cities has been due simply to the fact that a young educated person who finishes his or her education, naturally then looks to relocate into the best possible scenario for a career (typically downtown where financial and other businesses are located). As they progress - the next step is marriage and a family. By cutting services such as choices of nurseries, grocery stores, parks, shelters for the homeless, the city actually drove families out of the area (due to lack of choices regarding nurseries, shopping for food and having homeless on the streets, vice in shelters receiving assistance and counselling).

Again, from a strict business scenario you could make a strong case that an abundance of social services is nothing more than a cost centre with no positive revenue being generated- and should therefore be eliminated. This of course is a ludicrous proposal; however U.S. cities (including our nation's capital), inadvertently took this approach in the last 20-30 years and have paid dearly for this so-called "cost savings agenda". The result: families driven to the suburbs, which then caused inner cities or "city centres" to degrade demographically, financially and infrastructure wise.

I have read the proposal to close High School yards and essentially ascertained 2 main areas: cost savings and the fact that 2 other schools are within the local area. Rather than using a strictly quantitative argument to counter the closure proposal I will revert to a common sense approach:

What would be the cost to council and the city should 15 professional families with children leave

city and relocate to a suburb. The cost of lost tax revenue - revenue which is derived from nursery services, shopping for a family (vice a college student), entertainment revenue for a family etc... compared to the savings proposed in the closure document.

Next and perhaps the most common-sense challenge to the argument (that there are too many nurseries within a specific radius), would simply be this. Wouldn't you want a choice for families looking to relocate into your city centre? How many pubs does a university of Edinburgh student have to choose from --and is this choice of selection not a piece of the "entertainment" package used by any student, to choose a university? Even more revealing is this: how much income tax revenue does a student produce? (their revenue is to be produced when they graduate and start a family -- ironically). Why then -- should not a family have a choice of nurseries to utilize for their children, as I can assure you the student utilizing the 20-30 plus pubs is paying council a lot less than a professional family of 4?

Don't go the route of the U.S -- rather continue to maintain the quality of life competitive advantage you have over a U.S. city and keep High School Yards nursery open!

Sent: 16 November 2010 20:16
To: Early Years
Subject: Closure of High School Yards nursery school

To Gillian Tee, Director of Children and Families:

We write to express our opposition to the proposed closure of High School Yards Nursery School. Our [REDACTED] is currently enrolled there. She settled in very well at High School Yards. Despite the fact that she has been attending the nursery for only a few weeks she has made many friends and has bonded with the carers.

Previously she had attended a different nursery for two weeks but had not settled so well: she had many accidents and was irritable after nursery during those two weeks. Having found a nursery that works well for her we will be very upset if she has to move again. We are worried that so much instability is not good for children.

Furthermore, it seems that many of the children currently attending High School Yards in the morning will be forced into afternoon slots at the other nurseries. This would be impossible for our family to accommodate.

When we first applied for a place we were told that High School Yards did not have any places available. Later a child stopped going and a place opened up for our daughter. Therefore we are confused by the assertion, in Table 3.1 of the proposal, that High School Yards is not operating to capacity.

--

The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.

*Gillian Tee
Director of Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council
Council Headquarters
Waverley Court,
Level 1:4,
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh EH8 8BG*

Within the remit as mandated Chair of High School Yards Nursery School Parents & Workers Association, I am writing to confirm our decision that all parents/guardians of children attending High School Yards Nursery School are unanimous opposed to the proposed closure.

Following several meetings convened by parents/guardians of children attending High School Yards Nursery School, the deputation to the Education Committee and the public meeting of 9th November, we have

endeavoured to confirm and here reaffirm our views listed below:

- a) A recent Care Commission inspection resulted in two "Excellent" outcomes for High School Yards Nursery School. It is not in the best interests of the attending children that the nursery school is closed. However, in the event that a closure is insisted upon, we note here that it is preferable that the Royal Mile Primary School nursery class is closed in this event, and revenue saved from this closure is allocated to High School Yards Nursery to support its continued success.
- b) *HMIE report for Royal Mile Primary School (2.6) published on 26/01/2010 evaluated Royal Mile Primary School using How Good is Our School and Child at the Centre as:*

- *Improvements in Performance (1.1) –weak*
- *Learners' Experiences (2.1) –weak*
- *Meeting Learners' Needs (5.3)- weak*
- *Nursery class only –Improvements in Performance (1.1)-good*
- *Nursery class only- Children's Experiences (2.1) -very good*
- *Nursery class only – Meeting Learners' Needs -(5.3) very good*
- *Primary and nursery class together: The curriculum (5.1)-weak*
- *Primary and nursery class together: Improvement through Self-Evaluation (5.9)- weak*

On the six point scale from How Good is Your School and Child at the Centre, weak means "important weaknesses" and is evaluated at a level 2 out of six levels, ranging from excellent (6) to unsatisfactory (1)

- c) Also of particular importance on this issue is that an expert submission was made at the public meeting of 9th November 2010 stating that an independent nursery school is preferable to a nursery class attached to the Primary School.
- d) Regarding capacity, the proposal provided does not clearly note and distinguish the difference between capacity of the nursery school building as opposed to capacity and ratio of staff to children attending, these are distinct considerations.
- e) Regarding the capacity and ratio of staff to children attending, we must note that the nursery did previously provide the option to of wrap around time (in support of children and families with full day work commitments), but provision of such an option from senior management was on the condition that the qualified staff provision would not have a full time contract (contract was reviewed more once per year) and an unsustainable hourly rate of £8 per hour was offered. Consequently the nursery was not supported by senior management to attract families with full day work commitments (ie: particularly during late afternoons because wrap around time provision was discontinued).
- f) Regarding the proposals claim "to remove surplus capacity – we note communication from and to Mr Mike Rosendale, Head of Neighbourhood Services, City of Edinburgh Council in early 2008 which cites evidence that during session 2007/08 nursery schools within CEC were not allowed to admit children into vacant nursery places even although head teachers had sufficient staffing and capacity to do so. It must be emphasised that this limitation resulted in turning away paying families and limiting other placements.
- g) Concerning reductions of staff from senior management dating back to 2007. It must be noted that when members of staff are removed from a service it restricts the number of children who can be enrolled so looks like "surplus capacity". Children and families have simply been turned away when staff have been working to full capacity.

- h) At each of the several parents association meetings, the deputation to the Education Committee and the public meeting of 9th November, we have raised and emphasised that the claims made in the proposal of saving are not accurate and correct because redeployment of salaries within the estate rather than closing those employment posts is simply not a saving.
- i) The High School Yards Nursery School building was purchased for an amount of £70,000 in 1993 from the University of Edinburgh. If the building is not to be used as a nursery school it is proposed that £40,000 will be spent to board the premises and disconnect utilities. The building is currently secured for an essential community service and we view this as social wealth. Within the rationalisation program of 2007 it is stated that a 25% increase demand for early years education over a stated period, with only 1% allocated to council nurseries. We note that the lack of support from council senior management to provide wrap around time (see above), reduction of staff, withholding maintenance costs (other than essential costs) has influenced this outcome. In the event of increased demand for council funded early years provision – the closure of High School Yards Nursery School would result in a significant cost to the city, as opposed to the saving which has been suggested here.
- j) We note that the press announced that High School Yards Nursery School is facing closure on 27th September 2010. Within the same week the University of Edinburgh announced through the press that the premises next to High School Yards Nursery School has been earmarked to be used for a new facility. We note here our concern of lack of transparency that the High School Yards Nursery School premises may be utilised in connection with the new facility planned by the Edinburgh University. Such a situation would be highly improper.
- k) The proposal refers to maintenance costs amounting to £36,000 over five years. It should be noted that it has been determined at the consultation on 9th November, that this is a generic amount not a factual amount. To correct this it should be noted that only funding for essential maintenance has been provided since 2007. The proposal is misleading in this regard.

Further to the above, we note that a minute of the consultation of 9th November has not been received or published.

Please provide a written response to the above listed items.

Acting Chair,

From:
Sent: 07 December 2010 16:15
To: Early Years
Subject: Proposal to close High School Yards Nursery School

Follow Up Flag: Follow up

Flag Status: Completed

To Whom It May Concern,

I attended High School Yards Nursery School between 1977 and 1979.

I am a very firm believer in the theory that a stimulating, balanced, educative nursery experience goes a very long way to creating a stimulating, balanced, well-educated child.

After High School Yards I attended various schools in Edinburgh, studied in Manchester and London and worked as a journalist [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I hope The City of Edinburgh Council very seriously reconsiders its plans to close this transformative school in the centre of the city.

Many things make a man, but a good nursery education surely lays the foundations.

Yours sincerely,

071210

From:
Sent: 07 December 2010 16:20
To: Early Years
Subject: nursery school closures - consultation response

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Sir/Madam,

I was extremely disappointed to hear about your plans to close High School Yards nursery school and Westfield Court nursery schools in Edinburgh.

At a time when government at all levels finally seems to be recognising the importance of providing three and four-year-olds with a solid educational start in life the decision seems absurd.

Both nurseries, in their very different ways, offer young children an exceptional start in a unique, caring environment.

As a former pupil at High School Yards (in the late 1970s) who has kept in touch with the nursery since, I can attest to the fact that it offered me and my siblings the perfect spring-board into the rest of our education and eventually our adult lives.

Two of us are now national newspaper journalists, based in London and Australia, and one is an internationally award winning film producer. It is no coincidence that we have always excelled educationally.

Many children are not so fortunate. Your proposal seems to me to be a dereliction of your responsibilities for helping the poorest and most needy get on in life.

While I appreciate that in these financially tough times there will always be hard decisions to make, I firmly believe depriving thousands of future Edinburgh school children of the same chances that we had is wrong.

I do hope that you will reconsider.
Yours faithfully,

Dear Gillian Tee,

High School Yards Nursery School

Standards of education and care in High School Yards Nursery School have been consistently high for countless years and in many ways the school has been seen as a model of good practice.

The building, inside and out, has been used imaginatively to develop a balanced and comforting environment for children and families and numerous excellent reports from HMIE and the Care Commission will verify my judgement. There can be no justification for a decision to close such a highly regarded provision.

It is said to be closing for financial reasons. In the face of all that has gone on in High School Yards, the commitment of all those who have been connected to it and all those who have and could continue to be nurtured there, who makes such a decision in the name of saving money?

Who decides to undermine the viability of such a place by manipulating the number intake of children and consequently staff?

A decision to close may be simple and easy for some but it is no solution to the council's circumstances.

Closure will serve no real, long term purpose. It is short sighted and wrong.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council Headquarters Level 1:4
4 East Market Street,
EDINBURGH EH8 8BG

6 December 2010

Dear Director,

It is with sadness and concern that I respond to the Consultation Paper on the proposed closure of the High School Yards Nursery School (HSYNS), sadness at the prospect of losing such a centre of excellence, and concern that, even though the long term benefits of the provision of pre-school education appear to be understood by members of the Council's Children and Families Committee, ways cannot be found to keep this high quality example of education and care.

1.3.Rationalisation of the Nursery School Estate.

Given the demographic information that "the City's nursery age population is expected to rise in forthcoming years" and the fact of high demand for places and the fact of high demand at HSYNS it does not seem logical to close this establishment (see 3.2 below)

Councillor MacLaren told the consultation meeting that she "would not be keen on closure if children were adversely affected." It is difficult to see that children and families could be other than adversely affected by the removal of this high quality provision.

3.2 At the consultation on the 9th November this year parents questioned the statement that numbers of children on the waiting list were very low, saying that numbers had been deliberately kept low, particularly in the afternoon (see 3.3 below). This was corroborated by a recently retired nursery head teacher who reported that they had been told not to fill pm places. A parent tabled a paper on this matter and named the officer who ordered it.

3.3 At the above meeting much was made by members of the panel of speakers of parental choice. It was clear from the numbers of parents who spoke that they had made an informed choice in favour of HSYNS and that they shared a sense of belonging within a real community. Several parents reported that they would gladly have paid for an afternoon place for their child/children if that had been possible. Parents also stated that they cannot afford to send their child/children to a private nursery.

3.4 On the subject of the building and outdoor play areas, there has been no problem with the running of the nursery in this regard and it has never been perceived and reported in an inspection report. Indeed, when I attended the raising of the Green Flag, children, staff, families and guests were accommodated without difficulty. There has been so much good work in the garden at High School Yards following the tradition of the early Edinburgh Child Gardens. This has been a help and inspiration to colleagues in other preschool units with the publication of 'The Little Green Book' by the Nursery School and Sudeer Carrol.

The proposed closure of High School Yards Nursery School can be seen as yet another step in the running down of Edinburgh's excellent tradition of provision for the under fives; nursery schools absorbed by primary schools, reduction of full-time places, acting head teachers in post for long periods of time without the jobs being advertised and little or no specialised training provided for years resulting in a lack of appropriately qualified personnel. While there is need for a career structure for nursery nurses, it should not be used to replace teachers. This is little different from classroom auxiliaries replacing teachers.

A member of the consultation panel said that the department believed in flexible provision. In my experience this is sound thinking because it better meets the needs of families.

It is a sad state of affairs when money cannot be found to keep what is best for our young children when the evidence is clear and accepted that appropriate early years education and care has long term benefits, not least for public expenditure.

Yours sincerely

(Retired Nursery Head Teacher and Lecturer in Primary Education)

c
(ex Head Teacher)

I am opposed to the proposed closure of nursery schools in Edinburgh, particularly High School Yards.

The proposal passed by the Council was specious in its construction. The nursery schools have had their places cut since the Care Commission ratios were enforced, reducing the number of places to match the number of staff rather than increasing the staffing to match the number of children. The withdrawal of free full time places, the restriction of the tightening criteria, the constraint on selling additional time to working parents and the deliberate withdrawal of staff to increase the number of places in nursery classes has resulted in a concomitant increase in costs per child. The table comparing the current allocation of places to the capacities of the nursery schools was disingenuously misleading.

I worked in the Lothian area for twenty years and for the City of Edinburgh Council for eight of those. Having visited Reggio Emilia twice, Denmark and Sweden, I can say that the Edinburgh Nursery Schools offered a service for children and families on a level as good as the best provision I saw, if not better.

At the Consultation Meeting in November regarding the closure of High School Yards, every parent mentioned the welcoming atmosphere of the school and had chosen that provision. To repeat that there are no catchment areas for nurseries and that parents can apply anywhere is no consolation when their original preference is being ignored.

The criticism of the school building and outside environment has not been identified by the HMIE or Care Commission; deliberation and care have maximised the space available to supply an excellent learning environment for children. The site has its limitations but the provision at the Royal Mile Primary Nursery Class is far from perfect with a staircase preventing easy access to the outdoor area. This class has fewer children enrolled than High School Yards yet it is selected as the only option for increased free full time places.

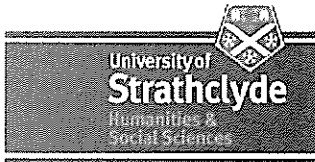
Evidence shows that a stand-alone establishment for children under five with substantial access to a teacher for most of each session produces the most effective pre-school education. In a nursery class, the danger of “schoolification of young children” is more likely, particularly when teachers without further qualification are assigned to the class.ⁱ

The experience of Edinburgh Nursery Headteachers enables their practice to incorporate preparation for primary school so that transition into primary is easier for the child. Although some parents feel that attending the nursery class improves the transition, this is not confirmed by research.

In West Lothian children start nursery just after their third birthday if places are available without having to wait until the following term. The fixed costs remain the same and there is little saving in delaying their admission. I am certain that the families and children in Edinburgh are not best served by this grudging and shortsighted allocation of resources by the Council.

I am sure that the closure of High School Yards would be a mistake and that savings could be found elsewhere.

ⁱ term first used in Sweden, but which is now widely used, e.g. in Bennett, J., Moss, P. and Kaga, Y. (2010) *Caring and Learning Together: A cross-national study of integration of early childhood care and education within education*. Paris: UNESCO



Gillian Tee,
Director of Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council
Council Headquarters
Waverley Court, Level 4.1
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

5th December 2010

Dear Ms Tee

Consultation on the Closure of High School Yards Nursery School

Whilst working in Australia this autumn it was brought to my attention that the City of Edinburgh Council was considering the closure of several of its world renowned nursery schools, amongst them High School Yards Nursery School.

It is with deep disappointment that I write to raise serious concerns about the closure of High School Yards Nursery School. It has always been a gem in the heart of the City. It is hard to understand the description "The small nursery site does not meet current requirements" (page 4 consultation document). For children its scale and intimacy brings a strong sense of belonging and ensures children's well-being even when their lives outside nursery school may be challenging. The participation of High School Yards in the Government funded "Positive Behaviour in the Early Years" Project in 2006 showed high levels of well-being and involvement in the children and excellent staff strategies for children who needed additional support.

The school led developments in nursery outdoor provision, and although the upper play area is small, to see both it and the remarkable wildlife garden described as follows "The small outdoor play area and issues with the layout means the nursery has been assessed as having poor suitability" (page 4) has caused me great surprise. The nursery school has participated in the University of Strathclyde Outdoor Spaces Project for which a wonderful design for the outdoor spaces at High School Yards has been developed by an international play designer in consultation with staff, children and parents. Furthermore the Head Teacher has recently completed her MSc in weighing risk and benefits of outdoor play for young children, which I had the good fortune to supervise.

Small children benefit from companionable learning relationships outside the home, from the stability offered by trained staff who are well led. The leadership provided by the Headteacher, Mrs Gill McKinnon has, in my view, been exceptional. Her secondment to the Inspectorate bears out that view.

I object to the grounds for closure – the falling roll is in my view a direct result of Council strictures on admissions, the per capita cost is therefore unnaturally inflated,

the lack of maintenance shown in the figures presented make a nonsense of costs outlined for maintaining the building in coming years as there can be little expectation that such monies would ever have been so spent.

The alternatives being offered to families also tell their own story. Royal Mile once housed 80 full time children on two floors. Its outdoor area has little sunshine and it has to be accessed by a staircase: no improvement in the offer to children. The arguments for improved transition to school are also flawed - all my research into transitions over the last 15 years shows physical proximity is no guarantee of appropriate transition arrangements whilst the specialist understanding of young children that free standing settings hold means they work well with receiving schools. St Leonard's on the other hand has a similar profile to High School Yards itself - but it has not suffered from the same strictures on waiting lists and enrolments that seem to have plagued the Edinburgh Nursery Schools under threat of closure.

The first twenty three years of my career were spent teaching in Edinburgh City and Lothian Regional Council early childhood services. Following a secondment to Moray House Nursery School from my first appointment to Craigenfinny Primary School, I taught at Milton House Nursery Class – now Royal Mile Primary School Nursery Class. My own three children attended High School Yards Nursery School, and from 1988 until 1993 I was Head Teacher at Westfield Court Nursery School. I have remained in contact with these two Nursery Schools since moving to the University Sector. When I worked at Moray House Faculty of Education I assessed teaching students at High School Yards, Westfield Court and Princess Elisabeth Child Garden: all three are excellent training sites.

I will write to you separately about Westfield Court Nursery School as there appears to date to be no current published consultation process despite the virtual closure effected by emptying the school of furniture, staff and children.

Rather than closing such provision I would recommend that the City recognizes the unique nature and history of its nursery school heritage by investing in these schools which represent excellent opportunities for development. The return on the modest investment would ensure benefit to more children and families and would bring credit to the City that once led Scotland's nursery education movement.

It is still the case that the earliest years of life affect all that follow. If the children had a voice they would not be seeking closure. Both the education and the stability that High School Yards Nursery School gave my own children is just what families continue to seek. I trust that the Council will reconsider its proposals: it must.

I would be pleased to discuss any of these matters further with you,

Yours sincerely

..
Aline-Wendy Dunlop, Professor Emeritus.

I have heard that the above Nursery School is under threat of closure. I should be most grateful if you would forward this email to those involved in the decision making process. All the evidence demonstrates that across the last hundred years, and to this day nursery schools have and do make a significant and important contribution to the quality of early educational and care experience of young children and their families. Nursery schools inspire at an international level across the world. To close them is to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. They are best value in economic terms. The way forward is to develop them so that they can continue to do be effective. I am very distressed to see the Scottish heritage of fine nursery education eroded. So much damage is being done to quality early childhood services in England, and I have always looked to Scotland because it places such value on excellence in education at every stage in a child's life, including early years.

Best wishes

No virus found in this incoming message.

Checked by AVG - www.avg.com

Version: 8.5.449 / Virus Database: 271.1.1/3300 - Release Date: 12/06/10 07:34:00

To Gillian Tee
Director of Children and Families
City of Edinburgh Council

6 December, 2010

Dear Gillian Tee

I am writing to you as Director of Children and Families to express my view of the Council's plans to close several nursery schools in Edinburgh to save money, and I especially address the proposed closure next year of the High School Yards Nursery School.

As you know, I am a specialist in research of the development of natural abilities in young children, the needs of their families and how these both may be best supported. I know, and I think you must too from your own life and family, that the vitality of preschool children is a powerful source of inspiration and strength for the community, as well as a vital time for the self-confidence and learning of the children.

I strongly oppose the planned closures, and other actions of the Council in recent years to reduce support for the remarkable quality of service that has been provided by these schools over several generations. I believe the financial argument, the claim that £300,000 must be saved by closing 'inefficient' provision, is based on bad calculations of the demand for places, on disregard of the proven long term benefits to the prosperity of the community of the care of young children and their families, with the guidance of trained teachers, particularly in parts of the city where poorer families live, and on ignorance of the moral and educational benefits to individual children of the work the threatened nursery schools have done for many years. I know the High School Yards Nursery School well and the remarkable leadership and inventiveness of its recent headmistress, and that she had been struggling with the consequences of management decisions that weakened the work and limited the number of children attending.

In my opinion the first task of a City Council is to take care of the community it serves, and its traditional institutions and history. It is not to satisfy more distant political and economic ambitions of a larger society. I also know that the Scottish Government has stated policies for early administering and funding child services that compare well with the best in Europe. Cutting back on public provision for early education is not part of the plan. Edinburgh is a famous place for tourists from other countries, but the cost of attracting and providing for visitors, or large businesses, must not be charged to the people who live here and care for their families. On the contrary, they need to trust the Council will give their needs priority.

The nursery schools of Edinburgh City are famous for the principles by which they have kept flourishing communities of young people fit and enthusiastic, where there is good fellowship and lively interest in all kinds of learning, and where the benefits are shared with parents from many cultures. You heard some of the parents whose children have benefited from High School Yards

Nursery School speak at the meeting we had on November 9th. This kind of start is the foundation for the children's success in formal schooling, and it is less expensive than dealing with difficulties in coping with a demanding syllabus and the harsh realities of social alienation later.

The early years are a time when children need the company of peers and of adults who know how to share their creativity and cooperation, not only the affection and care of parents, especially those who are struggling to hold down a job and make ends meet. I do not believe that private child care is best suited to supply this 'community of learners' environment, and the research on the importance of 'quality' in such services proves I am right. The best, most enjoyable and beneficial early quality child care is such as that which High School Yards Nursery School has been providing over the 40 years I have been in Scotland, and distinguished colleagues in child psychology and child welfare from overseas, including Professor Jerome Bruner or Dr. Bruce Perry, confirm this judgement. Alan Sinclair of the Work Foundation has found that the kind of young person employers seek is not one who has passed through advanced courses in information technology, literacy or numeracy, but one who is self-confident and good at social relations. Much of the technicalities can be learned by a sure and cooperative young person on the job. Creativity and social cooperation are the human abilities established and given potential in preschool years, if the education is of 'high quality'.

In short, I urge the council to go back to the drawing board, to scrap the plan to save money on early child provision, to evaluate and honour the achievements of Edinburgh in the past decades for achieving excellent standards of support for under 5s and their families in schools such as High School Yards Nursery School, with its experienced teachers, nursery nurses, and other supporting staff, working as a team for children and their parents. Freed from the inevitable corner cutting that happens in the private sector whose main interest has to be its own survival in the market place, such a school should be given unstinting support and held up as an example, not threatened with closure. No imported professional pedagogic practices are needed to improve such community services and teaching in Edinburgh, or to provide 'integrated' care. It is not difficult for an experienced nursery school head to cooperate with special needs and health services as necessary.

I hope I am clear.

To: Jane Ramage

Subject: RE: High School Yards Nursery School, Edinburgh

From: Alice.Ednie@scottish.parliament.uk [mailto:Alice.Ednie@scottish.parliament.uk] **On Behalf Of**
george.foulkes.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Sent: 07 December 2010 09:47

To: Marilyne MacLaren

Subject: High School Yards Nursery School, Edinburgh

Dear Ms MacLaren

I have received an email from a constituent with regard to the proposed closure of High School Yards Nursery School in Edinburgh. I understand from my constituent that this is due to close at the end of the school year in 2011.

My constituent writes:

This nursery is a centre of excellence and three to five year old children are looked after with great skill by staff and the families, many of whom come from abroad, and are given great support ...in the midst of all the evidence and the publicity given to early years you would think that they would at least reconsider. Can you help us to try and get a reprieve?

My constituent also informs me that she attended the meeting about the closure where parents and friends of the school, the school staff, ex teachers, and Colwyn Trevarthan, who is Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, all spoke in favour of keeping the school.

My constituent further writes:

I know we are short of money but the closure of a school like this is very short-sighted and does not take into account the value of nursery education to the child and the child's family. Adam Ingram says he is in favour of nursery/early years provision and then lets this sort of thing happen. Why say it if you cannot enable it to happen?

Pre-school education is extremely important and the increasing evidence shows that it is the early years which determine people's lives.

I am deeply concerned, therefore, about the proposed closure of this high quality pre-school provision and I shall be very grateful if you would explain why this is being proposed and ardently request that any decision of closure be reconsidered. It is well documented that good quality pre-school education enhances children's development and that the quality of provision makes a significant difference to outcomes for children.

I look forward to hearing from you.

George Foulkes MSP

Member for the Lothians

* * * * *

George Foulkes MSP

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

www.georgefoulkesmsp.com

www.youtube.com/georgefoulkes

(0131) 348 6827

07890 490706

* * * * *

For latest news and information about all aspects of Parliamentary business, MSPs and our work, visit the Parliament's website at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/>.

For information about how you can visit the Parliament, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/vli/visitingHolyrood/index.htm>.

Watch Parliamentary business live at <http://www.holyrood.tv/>

The information in this e-mail transmission and any files or attachments transmitted with it are strictly confidential and may contain privileged information. It is intended solely for the person or organisation to whom it is addressed and if you are not the intended recipient, you must not copy, distribute, disclose or take any action in reliance on it. If you have received this e-mail in error, please delete it from your computer system and notify the sender as soon as possible.

While this e-mail message and attachments have been swept by the content filter software for the presence of computer viruses, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body does not guarantee that either are virus-free and accepts no liability for damage sustained as a result of a virus. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that the onward transmission, opening or use of this message and any attachments will not adversely affect their systems or data or otherwise incur liability in law."



Sheila Gilmore MP
Edinburgh East Constituency

4880

Ack ✓
11/10

Wednesday, 27 October 2010

Cllr Marilynne McLaren
City of Edinburgh Council
City Chambers
High Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1YJ

Dear Marilynne

HIGH SCHOOL YARDS CONSULTATION

I have recently been to High School Yards Nursery School since the Council voted to consult staff on closure.

It is with great dismay to hear that High School Yards is under the threat of closure once again. This nursery in particular has served many generations that have lived and worked in Edinburgh City centre.

During a recent visit to the nursery I met staff and parents to discuss the issues that have been raised with regards to the layout and its future suitability. I feel the arguments used to propose the closure of this nursery are flawed. Whilst I understand that the nursery may need future works I do not believe that these reasons are convincing enough to establish a grounds for closure.

I was told that staffing levels at the nursery have been deliberately decreased, thus the nursery is unable to operate at capacity rather than being under-subscribed.

I would like the proposed closure looked into again. Having a nursery facility in the City centre should be regarded as an asset rather than an opportunity for short term financial gain.

I look forward to your response.

mp Sheila Gilmore MP

Constituency Office: 84 Niddrie Mains Road, Edinburgh. EH16 4DT.

Tel: 0131 661 7522

Email: sheila.gilmore.mp@parliament.uk

