

TO EARLY YEARS MINISTER NADHIM ZAHAWI AND LIZ TRUSS, CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

Dear Nadhim and Liz

SAFEGUARDING MAINTAINED NURSERY SCHOOLS WHEN TRANSITIONAL FUNDING ENDS IN 2020

Thank you for your engagement with our All Party Parliamentary Group on maintained nursery schools. We write as a cross-Party group of MPs to ask you to take urgent action to ensure their future.

As the officers of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes, and as MPs with nursery schools in our constituencies we are writing to you ahead of the Budget in the Autumn, and the start of the Comprehensive Spending Review to urge you to safeguard the future of maintained nursery schools.

We welcome the current government's recognition of the crucial role of maintained nursery schools as system leaders for the early years and providers of specialist support for some of the most vulnerable children, supporting high numbers of children with SEND and complex needs, and driving the government's social mobility agenda.

We also welcome the personal commitment of Ministers in the Department for Education to maintained nursery schools.

However, with many maintained nursery schools at risk of closure, a long term funding solution is now urgent and cannot await the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The commitment to providing supplementary funding of around £59m per year until 2019-20, with no firm indication of what will happen after 2020, leaves maintained nursery schools unable to plan and budget for the future and meet DfE requirements for schools to budget for three years ahead. An urgent decision is needed on how maintained nursery schools will be funded from 2020 onwards.

Warm words will not pay the bills, and a survey conducted by the APPG for Nursery Schools, Nursery and Reception Classes to which 271 maintained nursery schools responded found that 39% had a deficit budget this year and 64% expected to be in deficit in 2019-20. The number of nursery schools that report they will have a budget deficits is set to triple in three years, which is clearly unsustainable. Loss of the £59m supplementary funding would represent a 31% cut in funding.

Over the last few years, most maintained nursery schools have already undertaken extensive efficiency savings including restructuring and making staff redundant. The ability of maintained nursery schools to provide the exceptional quality of teaching, leadership and support for vulnerable children and families is being seriously undermined. Despite the promise of supplementary funding, many nursery schools have seen their budgets reduce since 2016-17. This has been exacerbated by the DfE's decision communicated after the fact to calculate the

supplementary funding on the basis of the universal 15 hours only, retrospectively punishing maintained nursery schools for prioritising a flagship government policy.

Maintained nursery schools cost more than other forms of early years provision because they perform a different role:

- **Maintained nursery schools transform lives**, especially for some of our most disadvantaged children (64% are in the 30% most deprived areas of England), because of the quality of education they offer (63% are graded Outstanding by Ofsted). No other part of the early years sector has the same track record at helping disadvantaged children to catch up with their more advantaged peers. They contribute to government's social mobility objectives by doing so.
- **Their admissions policies prioritise the children in greatest need.** They work closely with health and social care professionals to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families and offer integral family support within the nursery school. This early intervention work saves considerable amounts to the public purse later down the line.
- **They have a unique pool of expertise in supporting children with SEND** in the early years and helping those children access their early years entitlement, both taking children whom other settings do not have the resources or expertise to support and helping local settings to build their expertise and successfully support more children with SEND. Around 1 in 5 children in maintained nursery schools has SEND. Many families already struggle to find early education and childcare provision for children with SEND, and this would be hugely exacerbated by the loss of maintained nursery schools.
- **The whole early years sector benefits from the expertise of maintained nursery schools** acting as catalysts to raise standards in their locality through supporting schools and early years settings to work together to improve their quality. As a national network, which includes 36 Early Years Teaching Schools, these hubs of expertise are a vital resource to draw on, especially as local authority early years services have been cut back and are not resourced to provide as much training and support.

The government requires all schools to have three year budgets in place, so Maintained Nursery Schools now need to be able to make reasonable assumptions about their budgets from 2020 onwards. While we acknowledge that detailed funding settlements must await the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review, **we call on government to make good on its recognition that maintained nursery schools are schools with an in principle commitment by autumn 2018 to fund maintained nursery schools on the same basis as all other schools, namely school-based funding (including a lump sum and premises factors) in addition to funding per child in line with any additional costs identified by the Frontier Economics study. Given their particular focus on the most disadvantaged children – we ask you to consider whether maintained nursery schools should receive pupil premium at the schools rate, including pupil premium plus for children looked after.**

The cost of providing schools-based funding would be in line with the amount of supplementary funding currently provided. It would distribute it on a fair, equitable and predictable basis rather than perpetuating historical differences between local authorities.

Maintained nursery schools are clear that they have a different job to do from other early years providers, and their staff are deeply committed to continuing to support the most vulnerable children and families, and to providing system leadership for the whole early years sector. We call on you to continue providing the resources they need for that vital role, and to recognise

the urgency of doing so now. If maintained nursery schools are lost now due to inaction, it will be hugely costly to try to rebuild that resource in future.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Powell MP, Chair of the APPG Nursery Schools
Robert Halfon MP, Chair Education Select Committee
William Wragg MP, Vice-Chair APPG Nursery Schools
Jack Dromey MP, Secretary APPG Nursery Schools
Jess Phillips MP, Treasurer, APPG Nursery Schools

Rushanara Ali MP
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Julie Cooper MP
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Louise Ellman MP
Jim Fitzpatrick MP
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Andrew Gwynne MP
Helen Hayes MP
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Pat McFadden MP
Ian Mearns MP
Stephen Morgan MP
Theresa Pearce MP
Emma Reynolds MP
Ruth Smeeth MP
Craig Tracey MP
Daniel Zeichner MP

Lucy Allan MP
Luciana Berger MP
Tracy Brabin MP
Sarah Champion MP
Mary Creagh MP
Marsha De Cordova MP
David Drew MP
Nigel Evans MP
Vicky Ford MP
Ruth George MP
Lilian Greenwood MP
Harriet Harman MP
Sharon Hodgson MP
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Jonny Mercer MP
Lisa Nandy MP
Matthew Pennycook MP
Virendra Sharma MP
Laura Smith MP
Stephen Twigg MP

Rosena Allin-Khan MP
Roberta Blackman-Woods MP
Richard Burden MP
Rosie Cooper MP
Stella Creasy MP
Thangham Debonaire MP
Jack Dromey MP
Paul Farrelly MP
Vicky Foxcroft MP
Preet Gill MP
John Grogan MP
Trudy Harrison MP
Kate Hoey MP
Graham Jones MP
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Matt Western MP