

**Educational Institute of Scotland**  
**Briefing Paper for City of Edinburgh Councillors**  
**12<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

**Information regarding the importance of retaining Teachers and Head Teachers in nursery classes and nursery schools**

**Background**

The first nursery in Scotland opened in Edinburgh in 1903. This historic legacy of nursery education, and in particular, sector leading nursery schools led by nursery head teachers, continues to this day.

Edinburgh has invested heavily in the quality of its workforce, ensuring that there are full time teachers (who are degree qualified and GTCS-registered) in school nursery classes and in the standalone nursery schools.

Several of the nursery head teachers work in partnership with The University of Edinburgh to deliver the Froebel in Childhood Practice courses and offer practice visits in their settings. The Scottish Government's [workforce review](#) (Siraj, 2015) states

'The City of Edinburgh Council is one example of the best early learning focuses within Scotland. This is based on the professional development they provide for early years staff, much of which follows the Froebel model. This model is child centred with a play-based pedagogy, and is underpinned by a knowledge and understanding of child development which supports assessment, evaluation and planning.'

**Considerations**

The [Growing Up in Scotland](#) (GUS) report states, 'the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (Melhuish et al, 2008), has shown that children in high quality provision prior to starting school achieved higher literacy and numeracy levels than those in low quality settings or who did not experience pre-school.'

The EPPE project explored factors that influence quality. Findings include:

- Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings; however quality was higher overall in settings integrating care and education and in nursery schools.
- Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress.
- Quality indicators include warm interactive relationships with children, having a trained teacher as manager and a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff.

### **Staff Qualifications**

The Scottish Government also acknowledges the importance that degree educated staff in nurseries make and have invested heavily in their Additional Graduate Programme for settings in areas of high deprivation in order to focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The GUS report states 'Research by Education Scotland (2012) found that settings which had access to higher qualified staff, particularly teachers with a background in early years methodology or staff with specific early childhood qualifications - such as the BA in Childhood Practice - were more likely to offer higher quality learning experiences.'

The budget proposal suggests replacing nursery teachers with early years practitioners. There is a significant difference in the level of qualifications between these roles.

Role	Qualification	SCQF Level	Number of Credits
Early Years Practitioner	SVQ3/HNC	7	96
Teacher	Honours Degree	10	480
	& often additional Postgraduate Diploma	10 & 11	60 & 60

### **Care Inspectorate Gradings**

Although available data is mixed and there is evidence that a few local authorities who have reduced access to teachers are performing well, there is also evidence that removing nursery teachers has had a negative impact on Care Inspectorate (CI) gradings. CI data in the GUS report, on which the officer recommendation to remove nursery teachers was based, was from 2010. The data here is current, as published on the CI website.

Local Authority	Teachers in class	Care & Support	Environment	Staffing	Management & Leadership
Scotland		71%	64%	72%	58%
Edinburgh	Yes	81% (+10%)	73% (+9%)	81% (+10%)	74% (+16%)
West Lothian	Yes until Aug 18	75% (+4%)	70% (+4%)	77% (+5%)	67% (+9%)
West Dunbartonshire	No	32% (-39%)	32% (-32%)	47% (-25%)	37% (-21%)
Moray	No	55% (-16%)	68% (+4%)	50% (-22%)	45% (-13%)
Borders	No	58% (-13%)	49% (-15%)	64% (-8%)	44% (-14%)
Highland	No	70% (-1%)	41% (-23%)	59% (-13%)	47% (-11%)

The 4 Local Authorities in this table without teachers in nursery are all performing well under the national average, and significantly under City of Edinburgh.

West Dunbartonshire removed teachers from nurseries several years ago, however, they are now recognising this as a mistake (as is evidenced by their CI gradings which are up to 39% lower than the national average). They have also found that the impact has been a real disconnect between nursery and primary, which has manifested as disruption caused by P1 pupils in many of their schools.

Dundee is currently increasing its complement of nursery teachers, with the explicit aim of closing the poverty-related attainment gap. They have determined that the educational benefits of having nursery teachers working directly in classrooms with pupils, liaising with colleagues in primary schools, and leading teams of professionals, are likely to be a significant driver of improved outcomes at all stages in education – not to mention being a cost-effective way of using their Attainment Challenge funding.

It should be further noted that the very mixed provision in different local authorities makes direct comparisons difficult. It is instructive to look at the figures for the different types of provision within Edinburgh.

Local Authority	Teachers in class	Care & Support	Environment	Staffing	Management & Leadership
Scotland		71%	64%	72%	58%
Edinburgh	Yes	81%	73%	81%	74%
Edinburgh Partnership	No	56%	57%	59%	49%
Edinburgh Partnership	Yes	100%	100%	100%	100%

This shows very clear correlations between the presence of nursery teachers in classrooms and quality in terms of care and support. Given all these are within Edinburgh, there are likely to be far fewer confounding factors than with data that goes across different local authorities.

A final point – the CI gradings relate to Care and Support *within* nurseries. They do not report on educational outcomes and, in particular, do not look at how well children manage the transition into P1. Clearly, the specialist knowledge of nursery teachers, with their overview of Curriculum for Excellence and their ability to liaise closely with primary teachers, is central to ensuring that children can make a good start in school, with the lifelong benefits this brings. Edinburgh’s own policies and frameworks, in the Edinburgh

Learns documents, highlight the centrality of good transitions, informed by close partnership working and a detailed knowledge of individual children’s circumstances and their learning. This cannot be replicated by teachers who act as “consultants” across many nurseries. It requires teachers working closely with the children, their families, other professionals, and the relevant primary schools. This problem is likely to be particularly acute when supporting children with additional needs. If we are serious about inclusion, and about Getting It Right for Every Child, then specific, individualised transition plans, that have a clear focus on learning and teaching, are essential, and these are something that require the specialist input of teachers.

**Standalone Nursery Schools with Head Teachers**

The Care Inspectorate highlighted City of Edinburgh’s nursery schools in its recent publication [My World Outdoors](#) (2016)

‘Many of the original child gardens continue to this day, still run by Froebel-trained headteachers. These nurseries consistently achieve high grades from the Care Inspectorate and were recently highlighted as examples of best practice by Professor Siraj’s recent Independent Review’ (My World Outdoors, 2016)

The standalone nursery schools, Balgreen, Cameron House, Greengables, Hope Cottage, Liberton, St Leonards, Stanwell and Tynecastle, led by nursery head teachers, drive quality across the authority, with 72% of Care Inspectorate gradings at Grade 6. It must be remembered that Grade 6 indicates “outstanding or sector leading”.

Current City of Edinburgh Care Inspectorate Gradings

Setting	Grade 6	Grade 5	Grade 4	Grade 3
Nursery Schools	72%	28%		
Primary School Nursery Classes	8.5%	68%	21%	2.5%

This is significantly higher than in other local authorities

Local Authority	% Grade 6
Edinburgh	14.7%
West Lothian (had teachers until last year)	5.3%
Moray	3.4%
West Dunbartonshire	1.3%
Highland	0.8%
Borders	0.55%

This level of quality, where Edinburgh recognised as leading some of the best practice in Scotland, is more than likely to be lost if the nursery schools are subsumed into the local primary.

**Contribution of Nursery Head Teachers**

City of Edinburgh

- Teaching on the Edinburgh Early Learning and Childcare Academy for Modern Apprentice and Trainee Early Years Practitioners. Currently 90 students and 60 more to start in August 19.
- Delivering CPD – Teachers New to Nursery, SEAL, Aspiring Leaders, Developing Quality Environments, Block Play, Self-Regulation and more
- Working groups – Head Teacher’s Executive, Additional Support for Learning, developing planning and tracking guidance and formats.
- Practice visits for staff
- Board member of the South East Regional Improvement Collaborative

University of Edinburgh in partnership with City of Edinburgh

- Teaching on the Froebel in Childhood Practice certificate – 7 courses across Scotland – currently 300 students
- Practice visits – sharing excellent practice with practitioners from across Scotland.

Wider impact

- Leading practitioner research projects
- Contributing chapters to Early Childhood education books and journals
- Recognition of impact in national documentation, i.e. Care Inspectorate’s *Our Creative Journey*, 2017 and *My World Outdoors*, 2016; the Scottish Government’s workforce review.
- Jane Whinnett (HT at Balgreen and Hope Cottage) has recently received an MBE for her services to Early Childhood Education.
- Organising conferences – 10<sup>th</sup> conference took place in 2018 and had 550 delegates at the Assembly Rooms.
- Speaking at national and international conferences and seminars

### **Impact of Proposals**

- At a time of early years expansion, it will be impossible to replace 80 nursery teachers by August.
- Losing 80 staff may undermine the ability of City of Edinburgh to deliver their expansion plans by 2020.
- Quality is already under threat due to the expansion and removing the most highly qualified staff from nursery classes will have a significant impact on attainment and closing the gap.
- Due to the pace of change, all early years’ staff are under significant stress. The impact of these proposals is already having a negative impact on morale and levels of sickness absence.
- The plans to re-deploy nursery teachers to primary classrooms is of concern. Nursery teachers have chosen to specialise in Early Years pedagogy. Teaching in a primary classroom is completely different to teaching in nursery. Some have not taught in primary classes for over 20 years. There is likely to be a significant requirement for re-training, particularly for staff whose classroom teaching experience pre-dates Curriculum for Excellence. This will have a negative impact on children’s outcomes.
- Although there is not a straightforward correlation as models and quality of support varies amongst local authorities, Care Inspectorate gradings are likely to be

negatively affected by taking teachers out of nursery classes and replacing them with staff qualified to a lower level. As we know from the EPPE project, level of qualification has a positive impact on the quality of learning and on outcomes for children.

- Removing nursery head teachers, will have an even greater impact on high quality practice and will likely result in City of Edinburgh losing its sector leading status.
- It has been proposed that there will be locality-based teams of teacher and head teacher peripatetic support, however, there is no suggestion of future proofing this model. Without the opportunity to develop skills working in a nursery classroom, it will not be long before there is a significant lack of expertise. Teachers do not like working in peripatetic teams, for example Midlothian regularly lose their Early Years peripatetic teachers to nursery classes in other Local Authorities and have found it hard to recruit. Several East Lothian nursery teachers are now working in Edinburgh rather than in the peripatetic team.
- There will be no progression pathway for teachers in Early Years, therefore no real incentive to specialise in this area.