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**Save our Maintained Nursery Schools**

**Week of Action, 10-14 November 2014**

**with Parliamentary Meeting on 12 November 2014**

The National Campaign for Real Nursery Education, TACTYC, and Early Education are planning a shared week of action starting Monday 10November. Join us to raise awareness that Maintained Nursery Schools are a national asset in danger of being lost.

**Why are maintained nursery schools in danger?**

The number of local authority maintained nursery schools in England has fallen from around 600 in 1987 to just over 400 today. Most have no certainty about their future funding, despite being consistently higher rated by Ofsted than the rest of the early years sector or schools. Maintained Nursery Schools are funded by local authorities, which are facing further serious cuts to their budgets in the next few years. Some will be tempted to cut funding for maintained nursery schools in favour of cheaper alternatives.

**Why does it matter?**

Nursery Schools cost more per child, but they do more than educate individual children - they also contribute to raising standards across the early years sector. Losing these centres of excellence will be a loss for all children and families, and for practitioners working across the early years sector, who benefit from training and development opportunities and ongoing research taking place in nursery schools across the country.

**What is the aim of the week of action?**

It will try to increase wider public understanding of the distinctive strengths of maintained nursery schools including:

* better outcomes for children in disadvantaged areas
* expertise in supporting children with SEN and disabilities
* a workforce with in-depth specialist knowledge of early childhood education acting as centres for training and development across the sector eg through the Teaching Schools initiative.

**What is government doing to protect maintained nursery schools?**

The Education Select Committee have asked the government to set out a strategy to protect Maintained Nursery Schools, for the reasons set out above (Sure Start Children’s Centres Enquiry, 2013). Both Elizabeth Truss and her successor Sam Gyimah have said it would be “invidious”of government to ringfence funding for nursery schools in preference to nursery classes in primary schools, or to give extra funding to local authorities which have them when others have none. The data from the last 30 years show that inaction will simply lead to further closures – far from being invidious to act, it is neglectful not to act, and to run the risk of the remaining Nursery Schools being lost.

**Join our week of action!**

Our week of action aims to provide plenty of evidence of what we do in nursery schools and what makes us different from other settings in a positive way which doesn’t denigrate other providers. Experience shows us that most politicians, local authority accountants and even chiefs of education do not know what we do that makes us unique and different. Let’s show them, using our experience and the evidence from our work with families, local schools, other early years providers and all the children in our care!

**What is the target audience?**

We want to enlist support from the general public and parents, and influence local councillors and MPs. We want to persuade local authorities to support their maintained nursery schools, where they have them. But local support is not enough: national policy is needed to prevent maintained nursery schools closing as a result of short-term funding pressures at local level.

**What can we do?**

The kind of things you can plan for the week of action include:

* ask your MP to visit your nursery – invite the press as well
* organise a letter writing session for your parents (model letter available from NCRNE website at <http://ncrne.squarespace.com/>)
* make a video of success stories and post it on YouTube
* produce a flyer about what you do (see the model from the Warwickshire Nursery Schools ADD LINK)
* invite your local television news to come and interview you – tell them why you are special, outstanding and why you must remain open
* organise a staff meeting so your staff can contact their MP and local councilors and explain what makes your school special
* use Twitter to tweet about the value of nursery schools
* have an open day for neighbours, parents, former parents and children to attend! Make it a party, put out balloons outside, make sure the local shops know and are coming!
* Have a stall to leaflet and/or ask people to sign a petition in support of the campaign
* Arrange to lobby your MP on Wednesday 12 November, and invite them to attend our parliamentary meeting

For further information or advice at any time, please contact Early Education:

Tel. 020 7539 5400

E: office@early-education.org.uk

**Contacting MPs and councillors**

Email, phone or write to MPs and councillors and ask them for their support (see sample letter below).

You could meet MPs or councillors at their surgeries or invite them to your Nursery School.

**Who are your local councillors?**

Go onto your local council’s website or phone your local council’s Democratic Services department to find out whether elections are being held in your local area and how you can find information about all the candidates who are standing.

To can also email your current elected local councillors (and MP, MEPs etc.) via the website [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com).

**Who is my MP?**

You can find contact details for your local MP at <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/>

**Getting press coverage**

You might persuade local press to cover your involvement in the week of action if you can have something “newsworthy” or photogenic going on eg:

* a visit from your local MP (the MP’s office might help you arrange press coverage eg by issuing a joint press release)
* news about the nursery school eg new facilities or projects
* news about children’s achievements or activities
* a recent Outstanding Ofsted report
* any recent or prospective funding cuts which are jeopardising your future

How do I get press coverage?

* Email or ring a named reporter (if there’s someone who usually covers education) or newsdesk editor a couple of weeks in advance to see what angles they might be interested in. Ask if whether they would send someone along if you have an event, or if they just want the press release and photos, and check deadlines for getting into weekly papers.
* Draft a press release – see model at the end of this document which includes details about the national week of action, and which you can modify to suit your situation locally
* If possible send the press release to local contacts 1-2 days before so they can plan for deadlines.
* Consider following up with a phonecall to check if the paper plans to cover the story and to check they have all the information they need
* If you think this could get interest beyond the local area, contact the Beatrice at the Early Education office to discuss getting national media coverage – case studies to supplement the national activities will be helpful for national coverage of the week of action.

**National case studies**

We’re also interested in gathering case studies of nursery schools which are delivering on key government objectives, for example:

* recently starting to take on funded 2-year-olds
* involvement in a Teaching School alliance or other network to support local early years providers, eg if you are successful in bidding for the NCTL/DfE funding on “Driving up quality in the early years through Teaching Schools” programme
* delivery of EY apprenticeships and teacher training
* expertise in supporting children with SEN and disabilities
* data demonstrating how you close the gap for children from less advantaged backgrounds
* parent and family support activities
* any other way in which we can demonstrate the added-value provided by nursery schools

**An example of a letter to your MP/councillor**

Dear XXX

Many local families depend on high-quality early years provision to give their young children the best possible start to life, to enable parents to work and train, and to provide early help to overcomes difficulties.

According to Ofsted, maintained nursery schools are the highest rated part of the school or early years system (Ofsted Early Years Annual Report 2012-13), but the number of them has fallen from around 600 in 1987 to just over 400 today. Most have no certainty about their future funding, despite their quality.

That is why I am writing to ask you to [urge government to take steps to protect maintained nursery schools, as advocated by the Education Select Committee (Sure Start Children’s Centres enquiry report, 2013)]\* / [ensure the local authority protects maintained nursery school budgets from further cuts.]\* \*[delete as appropriate]

Research has also shown that early education – and particularly high quality early education – has an impact throughout children’s schooling, including on their GCSE results and their likelihood of going on to further study (DfE 2014 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/influences-on-students-development-at-age-16> )

I would like to share just one example with you [*add your own example of the quality and impact of your local maintained nursery school. This will make your letter/email much stronger and more personal. If you are using an example from your work, please make sure you anonymise it. Please don't disclose anything confidential]*

I hope you will be willing to speak up for maintained nursery schools and add your voice to ours.

Yours sincerely

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**Press release**

**[ADD A TITLE – A HEADLINE ABOUT YOUR NEWS STORY]**

[Tell the news story in a few paragraphs. If possible add a quote or two to support the importance of maintained nursery schools – from parents, nursery school head or governors, local councillors, MP, etc]

[Give a local contact]

[Contact Early Education, NCRNE or TACTYC if you’d like a comment in support of your story from one or more national organisations]

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**Notes to editors:**

1. The National Campaign for Real Nursery Education, TACTYC, and Early Education are holding a shared week of action starting Monday 10November to highlight the unique contribution made by Maintained Nursery Schools to early years provision, and the risk that this could soon be lost.

2. The number of local authority maintained nursery schools in England has fallen from around 600 in 1987 to just over 400 today. Most have no certainty about their future funding, despite being consistently higher rated by Ofsted than the rest of the early years sector or schools. Maintained nursery schools are funded by local authorities, which are facing further serious cuts to their budgets in the next few years. Some will be tempted to cut funding for maintained nursery schools in favour of cheaper alternatives.

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5. Nursery Schools cost more per child, but they do far more than educate individual children - they also contribute to raising standards across the early years sector. Losing these centres of excellence will be a loss for all children and families, and for practitioners working across the early years sector, who benefit from training and development opportunities and ongoing research taking place in nursery schools across the country.

5.The week of action is showcasing the distinctive strengths of maintained nursery schools including:

* better outcomes for children in disadvantaged areas
* expertise in supporting children with SEN and disabilities
* a workforce with in-depth specialist knowledge of early childhood education acting as centres for training and development across the sector eg through the Teaching Schools initiative.

6.Both Elizabeth Truss and her successor Sam Gyimah have said it would be “invidious”of government to ringfence funding for nursery schools in preference to nursery classes in primary schools, or to give extra funding to local authorities which have them when others have none. We argue that on the contrary, it is vital that government saves these beacons of excellence for the good of all.

7. For more information about the national campaign contact Beatrice Merrick, Chief Executive of Early Education (e: beatrice@early-education.org.uk or tel: 020 7539 5400)

Early Education (The British Association for Early Childhood Education) is the leading independent national charity for early years practitioners and parents, campaigning for the right of all children to education of the highest quality. Founded in1923, it has members in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and provides a national voice on matters that relate to effective early childhood education and care of young children from birth to eight. The organisation supports the professional development of practitioners through publications, training, conferences, seminars and access to a national and regional branch network. For more information on the work of Early Education visit [www.early-education.org.uk](http://www.early-education.org.uk)

Early Education is registered as a charity in England and Wales (Registered Number 313082) and Scotland (Registered Number SC039472).

Details for NCRNE and TACTYC?