

Retaining high quality childcare provision at Dover Place, Bath

Statement from Clare Crowther 12th June 2013

Norland College has made the strategic decision to cease operating its childcare facility in Dover Place from August 31st. Closure of this nursery will lead to the redundancy of 19 staff and the loss of childcare and early education for 109 children.

The nursery building has a shared ownership between the Council and the Diocese of Bath and Wells. I am therefore here to request your support in my bid to secure the building in order to continue high quality childcare for the community of Bath.

The families of Bath are facing the loss of 97 FTE childcare places this summer.

As the current nursery manager, I have determined a suitable business plan, and with personal funds supported by investment hope to purchase the building to continue this viable childcare business.

The nursery philosophy is unique to Bath. It offers care to children, through a free flow play environment and mixed age key family groups. It enables secure attachments that foster confidence and independence well beyond the formative years.

The mixed age groupings promote children to learn from each other, not just cognitively but also the subtle rules and expectations that are represented within any thriving community.

Data highlights that the philosophy of the nursery makes a clear difference for the children of our community. Our children have high levels of wellbeing and achievement.

This year 100% of children entering school this September will have made significant progress and 94% of these children will be working well within or above the expected stage of development.

Research recognises that children attending a high quality preschool, will have a lasting effect in promoting and sustaining better social/behavioural outcomes.

The location of the nursery, lends itself to true community cohesion. All children and families are fully integrated regardless of social or economic background. The disadvantage that many of the children within our immediate community face, can be counterbalanced by the opportunity for them to access the high quality provision available to them.

Currently 51 children access the nursery through their free early years entitlement.

Children Services are facing significant, budget cuts in 2014 and beyond.

The nursery already offers some of these services. A free baby group for new and expectant parents of the community runs weekly. A parents group offers parenting support and skills. We have strong partnerships with Health Visitors and multi agency teams that enable us to offer family support to 'hard to reach' families.

If successful in my bid the delivery of these services together with, Early Language Development courses; a possible childminding network and the sharing of resources are services that can be developed further for the benefit of the community.

The nursery is a category one provider, rated 'good' by Ofsted and holds the highest Early Childhood Environment Rating System (ECERS) score of all EY providers in Bath. This makes the setting a more, than suitable provider, to continue its offering of funded two year old places, maximising access to quality early years provision.

The building requires significant financial investment. In addition to the purchase price, an estimated £240,000 is required to complete essential works before any additional refurbishment cost are considered. Should the Local Authority be seeking alternative use for the building.

I therefore hope that the council will support the proposed management buyout in order to retain high quality care and education for the children and families of Bath that in turn will grow a stronger inclusive community.