

Statement from Amy Lunt on behalf of Concerned Parents of Norland Nursery

Wednesday 12th June 2013

I am here this evening to speak on behalf of the parents of the current Norland Nursery in Dover Place. We are asking for your support in enabling Clare Crowther, the current nursery manager, to purchase the Dover Place building so that she may continue running the nursery and provide parents with a seamless childcare service. Our request is backed by a petition with over 170 signatures.

Anyone who has visited the nursery when the children are present will recognise what a special place it is. Uniquely in Bath, the nursery operates on a freeflow system with children of all ages able to follow their interests in painting, music, building, playing outside or simply playing with friends. Every child belongs to a key family – a mixed age group of children cared for by a key person - and they remain in those families throughout their years at the nursery. These small family groups come together for meal times, stories and quiet time. This system enables the children to build their confidence by promoting independence, whilst offering the stability and security of the family unit. Relationships grow between children of all ages, siblings are able to play together, creating a caring, nurturing and inclusive environment.

Over 100 children attend this nursery, from all sections of the community. The nursery provides a vital service to Bath's parents, offering high quality childcare for children from 16 weeks to five years, from 8am to 6pm, every day. Sadly, Norland has decided to close its nursery on August 31st, but it is Ms Crowther's aim to continue running the nursery on the same basis from September 1st, offering a seamless service to children and families.

And this service is badly needed. Parents need high quality childcare provision to enable them to work. There are other nurseries in Bath, but there aren't enough places in good and outstanding settings to meet the needs of Norland families, especially as another setting nearby is closing in July. The closure of our nursery and that setting would result in the loss of 97 full time places, which in reality would affect well over a hundred families as many children attend part time.

The implications of this are clear – if parents cannot access decent childcare, they cannot work. Therefore closure of this nursery would not only mean the loss of 19 jobs; for some families it could also mean the loss of a working parent.

Time is of the essence. Ms Crowther is able to offer us a seamless service, so that parents may continue to work in full confidence of having childcare in place, and in the knowledge that our children will remain within the secure, loving environment of their nursery. But she can only do this if there are no barriers to her purchase of the building so that due process can be followed and the appropriate procedures can take place before 31st August.

The care children receive in Early Years settings is vital for building confidence, communication, relationships and in establishing life long learning. This nursery can provide that care to families from across the community. We therefore ask that you give your full support to the continued use of the Dover Place building as a nursery, not only for the benefit of current parents, but for Bath families well into the future.