

St Mary's CE Primary School Request to extend the lower age limit by addition of the Early Years Provision.

I am speaking this evening in support of this application. I have visited the school a number of times recently and seen the enormous improvements which have been made since 2008 when rolls were falling, and I was afraid the school would close. Instead it has been transformed, both as an educational facility and as a centre for community activity, with grounds so varied, well cultivated and imaginative that we entered them in the South West in Bloom competition. This is due to the hard work of staff, parents and pupils, and it makes a lot of sense now to extend the process by this measure.

There is much research to show that access to high quality Early Years provision helps children do better throughout their school careers. The years 3-5 are absolutely vital, but the more so in Writhlington where there is a lack of resources and modern play facilities and an inadequate bus service to Radstock. Children need a safe and happy environment in which to socialise and make friends. The school is the hub of the community, and children will benefit from being in one integrated system. I am informed that the current Writhlington Pre-School committee has agreed to the dissolution of their group from the end of term in July and St Mary's governors are proposing to incorporate the provision in the school to meet the needs of all the pre school children in Writhlington. Parents have been told that the school will continue to ensure that there is a comprehensive and well balanced curriculum and it is evident that children will still be safe and secure –and encouraged to eat their vegetables!, They run a 'Stay and Play' scheme for the Writhlington community and I know myself from talking to people how good their community links are. I also know for how many troubled families this will be a lifeline. I see children running to school in their enthusiasm –something which never happened at the grim 1950s primary school I attended.

So I request you to support the proposal

Cllr Eleanor Jackson (Lab. Radstock)