



Trinity Primary School Parent Council

Response to the City of Edinburgh budget proposals 2019/20

In preparing this response, Trinity Primary School Parent Council has:

- Reviewed the Change Strategy 2019-23
- Attended Locality Meetings and discussed this issue with Parent Council members from other schools
- Attended the additional consultation event for Parent Council Chairs at the City Chambers
- Discussed this at our regular Parent Council meeting and in subsequent correspondence

Context

We have based our response on the proposals set out in the Change Strategy, 2019-23, and on the answers to our subsequent questions from Council officials and local Councillors. However, our impression from the additional consultation event was that this was not the final set of budget proposals and these would be shaped by further negotiation. You will appreciate that this makes it difficult to comment in detail.

We understand that the budget might impact on Trinity Primary School in the following ways:

- 1.5% cut to school revenue budget
- A saving at management level of £200,000 from the Support for Learning budget
- The removal of qualified nursery teachers from school nurseries

Our response to each of these is set out below. We have based it on the three principles of the Change Strategy:

- High quality services
- Focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce long-term reliance on services
- Sustainable and inclusive growth

Cutting School Revenue Budget

Schools are facing increasing rolls, are expected to perform an increasing number of tasks, and are working with children and families with complex and demanding needs. In this context, any cut to the core revenue budget of the primary school is contrary to all three of the change strategy priorities. With much of the school budget being required for staff costs, the potential impact of a cut will be to reduce the capacity of the school to deliver a high quality experience: fewer materials; fewer activities; fewer

opportunities to innovate. The danger is that the result is a service that is not high quality, does not achieve its potential in relation to prevention and early intervention, and places so much pressure on school staff that it is unsustainable, resulting in higher levels of attrition from the teaching profession and, in the longer term, incurring further costs.

Some schools might be able to make up some of the shortfall through contributions from parents and carers in the community. You will appreciate that the capacity for the community to do this varies from school to school and that it creates a very unequal (far from “inclusive”) funding environment.

We therefore ask you to oppose any cuts to school budgets.

Cuts to Support for Learning

We understand that the Support For Learning budget is broad and does not just include schools. We have been told that this cut would relate to the management of the service and not be a removal of frontline provision. Whilst genuine efficiencies and streamlining at head office level are welcome, we are concerned that any removal of central support for schools would put further pressure on teaching staff. Our response to the Scottish Government’s Governance Review in 2017 highlighted the importance of adequate support from local authorities for HeadTeachers and schools to provide a high quality service. It is not sustainable to transfer this workload to schools and the impact would be to reduce the potential of this work in terms of early intervention.

We therefore urge you to ensure that these are genuine efficiency savings and will not adversely impact the families receiving this support, or the schools charged with delivering it.

Removal of Teachers from Nursery Schools

We understand the pressure that the Scottish Government childcare legislation has placed on Council-run nurseries. Our concern is that “childcare” and “education” are not the same thing and that by removing the qualified teachers from the schools you are reducing the high quality of service for early years education, deemed to be vital in terms of closing the attainment gap and therefore for early intervention.

We understand that there is a proposal for teachers to oversee the curriculum in nursery schools on a cluster basis. Our concern with this is that the teaching resource then becomes another “centralised” cost that would be politically easier to reduce further in subsequent budgets.

Therefore, we urge you to consider carefully the implications of removing nursery school teachers from Council run nurseries and to guarantee that they will continue to have dedicated teacher input in the longer term.