**The case for teachers in Early Learning and Childcare settings (ELC)**

**Issue**

Qualified teachers play a distinct and extremely important role in high performing nursery education teams.  Scotland urgently needs to increase teacher numbers in this sector.

**Headline position**

If we as a society are serious about making Scotland the best place to grow and learn we must ensure that all children have access to suitably qualified staff with specialised training linked to teaching, learning and assessment, specifically teachers. For the Government to succeed in achieving excellence and equity and make progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap they must invest in expanding the opportunities for teachers to pursue a career in ELC putting the rights of children at the heart of our education system from the earliest stage of a learner’s journey.

**Full Position**

Despite a commitment by the Scottish Government for ‘access to a nursery teacher for every nursery age child’ and considerable evidence demonstrating the long term impact of trained teachers in ELC settings, many local authorities are diluting or dismantling this aspect of their ELC provision. In the interests of our pupils, and of Scotland’s finances, this trend must be reversed and cognisance taken of the unique role played by qualified teachers in the ELC sector across Scotland.

The considerable and growing body of evidence tells us that:

* Access to high quality ELC settings has a long lasting impact on a child’s cognitive and behavioural outcomes
* Teacher training has a complete focus on pedagogy and the role of the teacher in supporting children in progressing across and throughout curriculum for excellence. The multidisciplinary approach within an ELC setting ensures that teachers can have a focus on teaching, learning and assessment, supporting colleagues having an impact on outcomes for learners. Evidence shows that other groups of staff improve their practice when working with teachers.
* There has been an injection of investment into the ELC sector nationally due to the Government’s commitment to expand a child’s ELC entitlement to 1140 hours annually. It has been recognised that expansion of the ELC sector nationally should not be at the expense of quality experiences for all children This is a crucial time to emphasise the unique role of the teacher in ELC settings in ensuring high quality learning and teaching. (Blueprint 2020: Quality Action Plan)
* The current approach – removing or diluting the role of teachers in ELC settings – is a save now, pay later policy.

“Summary statistics for schools in Scotland no 9 2018” demonstrates the decline in teacher numbers employed within the ELC sector across Scotland. It also highlights the disparity between authorities in employing teachers to work with our youngest and most vulnerable children resulting in a post code lottery for learners.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-statistics-schools-scotland-9-2018/pages/5/> (Chapter 5)