

[parentcounciltrinity@gmail.com](mailto:parentcounciltrinity@gmail.com)

Edinburgh

20 February 2024

Deputation to the City of Edinburgh Council Meeting, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024

Made on behalf of Trinity Primary School Parent Council

We are writing to you as you set your budget in what we recognise are incredibly challenging conditions, to ask you to prioritise the funding of schools.

Last month we made a Deputation to the Education, Children and Families Committee (see attached), in response to the proposals for £8.2m of cuts being proposed at that meeting. We are relieved and heartened to hear that these have been deferred for this year and have two further points to make:

In the short term, we urge you to support budget proposals for this year that maximise school budgets. The proposed cuts would have been disastrous, but the current situation is not healthy, sustainable or good for the long term future of Edinburgh.

Beyond the current budget, we urge you to ensure that the cuts are not applied next year either, or in any subsequent year. Everything that we said in our January Deputation still stands. The children, families and teaching staff deserve adequate resourcing to ensure the best possible outcomes from a service that delivers a universal human right. Each child only has one shot at their school experience and we are seeing increasing evidence of the impact of underfunding on all aspects of learning and teaching, particularly for those year groups and families that were impacted by pandemic lockdowns. We have had repeated assurances that you recognise the importance of funding the service appropriately and hope that you are able to action these as a full Council.

We would be very happy to meet you to discuss this matter in more detail, and look forward to sharing the results of the budget process with the families of the 580 children at Trinity Primary School.

Trinity Primary School Parent Council

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19 January 2024

### **Deputation regarding the education budget proposals**

We are writing to you to express our concerns about the proposals set out in the City of Edinburgh Council's committee papers.

The challenges facing society today are well documented. We are living in an era of low economic productivity and extensive global competition, with an ageing population that will require increasing levels of support to sustain and care for it. In the meantime, one in four children lives in poverty, more and more children are presenting with mental health issues and challenging behaviours, and inequality in experience and attainment continues to slow progress. The recruitment and retention of teachers and school staff is at an all-time low. Children have missed considerable time in the classroom over the past four years.

In order to address these issues, we need to be investing in education. Schools are supposed to be the places that support learners and their families, overcome differences in experience, aspiration and opportunity and equip all learners with the knowledge and skills that they need to become productive members of society who, through their endeavours, character and taxes, will support others. We cannot achieve this if the schools are not properly resourced.

Against this background we wholly oppose the proposed cuts to education and children's services outlined in your budget. School budgets are already stretched and inadequate for the services you expect them to deliver and children are not currently getting the support they need, with impacts being felt by everyone in the classroom. Schools have not been protected from previous budget cuts because they have had to absorb the implications of cuts to other services. They are literally the last service standing. To cut budgets further might well cause them to fall over. These cuts will have short- and long-term consequences that will end up costing us all more money to put right.

We know that you agree with us that education is important to your constituents, which is why so many of you placed it prominently on your election campaign material.

These proposals have been developed with no meaningful consultation with service users (children and their families) or, to the best of our knowledge, with school teaching staff. Those of you who attend our meetings will be aware of the existing pressures on school budgets. Further cuts will, in our view, render the service unfit for purpose. You will be letting our city - and our children - down.

We ask you to reflect on the proposals, and to:

1. Agree that you will do everything in your powers to ensure that the Council Gets It Right For Every Child. Ideally this will mean increasing funding from current levels to adequately deliver the service that is required, and certainly not imposing further cuts.
2. Consider whether there are other areas of council spending where cuts would have a smaller economic or social impact than in education, and prioritise these. Not all cuts in expenditure are equal in impact and to target a service that is time-limited and delivering a universal human right will do considerable harm. The Education Committee could send a strong signal here by encouraging this approach.
3. Pause any proposals to allow for proper consultation with parents and, fundamentally, with your own teaching and support staff.

We ask all of you to work together to resolve this situation, and to take ideas to address it from all political parties. As a group of parents with different political views and priorities please know that we will consider you all more favourably if you cooperate rather than descend into party politics. We would be delighted to engage in further dialogue if that would be useful.

Thank you for your time and support.

Trinity Primary School Parent Council