

Emily B Stewart



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To Whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of the recent review of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel in regards to 3 yr olds starting formal schooling in Jersey. I do not believe that it is in the best interest of young children to start this early in a proper school. I understand that it is useful for parents to have childcare sorted from an early age because most parents work in Jersey. But from my 8 years experience in Jersey of working in schools here, and in my previous experience living in London, Spain and the USA, I firmly believe a more nurturing, play based environment with low numbers of children is ideal. In return, these young children will have more balanced social development, and be more stable in terms of their emotional development.

I worked in special needs education in Jersey as a keyworker in secondary schools and in primary. From these experiences I feel there is a real need to focus more on children's emotional development in these crucial young years of their life. Being put in daycares and schools with large child to adult ratios is becoming detrimental and creating adolescents with serious behavioural and emotional issues.

Two years ago I quit my job because I believed in early years intervention and nurturing from 0-3 yrs, and the job I was in wasn't rewarding enough. It was very challenging and again and again I was working with children and parents, who I believe needed more input at an earlier age. I'm not being critical of Jersey's education system.... I only believe that more quality care and education in the early years would help the later years and reduce later costs on the education system.

I am now working as a childminder (which I did in the States when my children were younger) and feel my new purpose in life is to educate and nurture young children in to being happy, well adjusted, resilient individuals. I would like to see more parents choosing options that are more suitable for their children's needs. If parents could have more financial assistance in choosing which option is best for their child, then that would be better. Maybe a parent of one year old could get 15 hours free childcare, 2 year olds get 20 and 3 year olds 30 hours. They could choose an educational environment that matches their child's needs better and thus resulting in a happier more balanced child. This environment could possibly be home care (childminder), nanny (for ones needing more one to one), small nurseries not attached to a big school, etc...starting formal school at 5 yrs old. A more social, interactive, nurturing, play based early years education has been well researched and is a popular form of early years education all over the world.

In conclusion, I would like to say again... that based on my experiences in the education and childcare setting of 25 years, children reach far better outcomes in adolescence and life if they are cared for in a nurturing way that meets their own individual needs, even from an age of 0 years old. Starting formal school at the 3 years old isn't best for emotional development. It is overwhelming and not in line with their natural social development. If some kind of compromise could be looked at so that parents have adequate care AND their children are cared for in a more quality way, this would benefit society and Jersey's children.

Regards,

Emily B Stewart