

Dear Deputy Hill,

The current allocation of States Nursery places is a lottery with the winners receiving up to 30 hours of provision per week and the losers nothing. In fact if, for instance, you are the proud parents of twins and do not gain places for them you could hit the jackpot and pay out thousands of pounds for private nursery tuition.

We do allocate places with reference to the agreed criteria but there are never enough to satisfy demand. Consequently I see the entitlement of 20 hours as a positive and fair step towards equality.

Many parents do not need 30 hours from the outset in September as some children who have just turned three years of age find it too much to cope with. It can take a considerable time for the full allocation to be taken up yet unless it is given from the beginning it can't be available at a later date. Unoccupied places are not an effective use of a very expensive resource.

The 20 hour entitlement will mean some radical rethinking 'outside the box' on how best to deliver Nursery education but twenty hours in Nursery seems to be a more natural and comfortable progression towards the thirty hours spent in our Reception classes.

Thirty hours may serve or even be essential to some working parents but at what cost to very young children?

Over the last ten or more years I have seen a change in the needs of working parents. Their workplace is more demanding than ever. Most now will only consider full time places whereas formerly there was a mixture of full and part time in evidence. We served more families then and the new proposals may provide the opportunity to shift the focus from demands on parents and from employers to how best to serve the needs of children in our Nursery classes.

Yours sincerely,

Ron Brown, Head teacher, St. Lawrence School.