

Cardonald Primary Parent Council
C/O Cardonald Primary School
1 Angus Ave
Cardonald
Glasgow G52 3HD
10th February 2023

Dear Councillor

We are writing to you as the Parent Council representing the whole parent forum of Cardonald Primary School, with concerns regarding the recently proposed cuts bandied about in the press and matters specific to our own school.

The cuts mentioned affect the education of all children but especially the education of the most vulnerable in our city.

Potential cost of living, health and well-being impacts

To be able to learn the pupils need to focus, and that comes with the nourishment of body and mind. The suggested change to the rollout of Free School Meals would be detrimental to many, as would the axing of the Holiday Food Programme. This programme provides the only food that many Glasgow children receive during holiday periods. With several of the Third Sector organisations within Glasgow City Council, that also provide such services, getting little or no funding recently, we feel Education and GCC are failing to provide for our most vulnerable young people. Third Sector organisations provide food for our young people in a dignified way - children get to take part in holiday activities while being provided with a meal or snacks. We all know that there has been a sharp rise in families accessing food banks and with some food banks struggling to provide help at times, the Holiday Food Programme is more important than ever. With the cost of living crisis and energy prices soaring there will no doubt be more, not fewer families, in need of this help.

Another huge concern within our committee is the citywide loss of school uniform/clothing banks. Lots of families across the city rely on these to help reduce the cost of their school day. Not all schools operate their own uniform bank and charities like Glasgow's Preloved Uniform provided an essential and discreet service, but due to loss of funding, this charity has now closed. Organisations that provide this service struggle with high demand vs the running costs and lack of funding. This in turn pushes the responsibility back to schools, back to already overstretched staff and overstretched school budgets. GCC should look at ways to make uniform banks accessible and discreet for all, which would help the city reduce its clothing waste while helping families with the cost of the school day.

Due to the loss of support for Third Sector organisations through the recent rollout of the Glasgow Communities Fund, we have major concerns for services that work closely with schools, that they will have to withdraw due to lack of funding and/or may no longer exist. This will cause issues citywide with services such as youth work, IT support, and many more specialist services now unable to support schools and provide the additionality schools rely on. Schools will then have to find resources to continue these services directly and further stretch budgets and staff time.

It is our opinion that short-term, narrow-minded withdrawal of funding for key Third Sector services will have a medium and long-term impact on the Council's overall budgets, as they may well be legally forced to fill in the gaps to services, as a result of their current budget strategy.

Proposed reductions in staffing

We are aware that teachers are already overburdened, taking on the roles that should be covered by allied professionals such as counsellors and educational psychologists. The rumoured cuts to staffing numbers worry us that a further increase in workload will lead to increased levels of burnout and absence and decreased retention, impacting the quality of education and support for our children.

Proposed cuts to specialist services

We express grave concerns over the rumours of proposed cuts to specialist services like nurture, education psychologists, EAL etc.

Glasgow as you know is the largest and most diverse local authority in Scotland, this means we have a wide spectrum of needs across our education establishments. Services like our nurture service, which was recently reported as a 'success story', is key support for our most vulnerable children, making nursery or school feel like a welcoming and supportive environment. It's a bit of a contradiction to then be considering cutting it.

With over 170 different languages spoken in Scotland, you would expect a metropolitan city like Glasgow to ensure that is supported across education, so how welcoming or nurturing can our schools and nurseries be if we are not providing a service to our families where English is not their first language?

We are all aware that we are in the midst of a mental health crisis, and unfortunately, that includes our young people. Our children and young people are still trying to recover from the Covid pandemic and we are only starting to see the impact of the pandemic now. Cutting services like educational psychologists is exasperating the situation further, not to mention the implications for staff and families if young people cannot access specialist help, it's only pushing it down the line to become a bigger problem.

Additional support for learning

We would also like to raise again the outstanding concerns around transport available for pupils with additional support needs. A poor service interrupts the education of some of Glasgow's most vulnerable children. Parents are seeking clarity about what GCC and Education Services are doing regarding this and to know that they are not being ignored. There are also issues regarding the continued NEC rollout for this group; parents of children who previously had a companion travel card are experiencing ongoing issues with the new free bus travel card. Pupils are being encouraged to uptake the NEC but are unable to hold their disability card along with the NEC that allows free travel for a companion. We have had reports of families now needing to pay for the companion's travel because they cannot get a disability card while their child has an NEC. We would like to know what is being done to correct this along with the other outstanding issues regarding these cards. Glasgow Life has not been providing an accessible and effective alternative application service as expected.

We would very much appreciate it if you would take our views into consideration when you are making decisions. We would also be willing to meet with anyone to discuss our concerns further.

Kind regards,

On behalf of Cardonald Primary School Parent Council
Mrs Sharon Corr
Chairperson