



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01486

Name of petitioner

Julie Wales

Petition title

Primary one class sizes and sibling placing requests

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve national quality in the primary one academic year by reducing average class sizes to 18 with an upper limit of 20; direct additional funding to resource the measures taken with appropriate staff, accommodation and physical resources; protect the family unit through amendment to current policy to ensure that siblings are not refused placing requests to be schooled alongside family members, and proactively prepare for future upsurges in the population to avoid displacement of siblings in primary schools.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have specifically campaigned in the Glasgow Herald for the class number to be reduced to 18 as the upper limit of 25 is having the unfortunate side effect in Scotland that a number of Siblings are being refused placing requests.

As a result of the lengthy appeal process, Schools across Glasgow cannot specify their numbers for P1 as parents hang on for their appeals. We are forced by Glasgow City Council to wait for the appeal board meeting for sibling placing requests until mid June as the upper class limit is 25 and so the council must extra another members of staff to accomodate these siblings. The board then make parents wait a further 14 days after the appeal to deliver a result, leaving families in limbo and P1 pupils unprepared for the school they are allowed into.

Meanwhile local MSP James Dornan has advised us to wait for the appeal although Margaret McDougal MSP has written to Maureen McKenna (Director of Education) in support of my specific case. I have now asked her to ask a question in the Scottish Parliament about class sizes being reduced and siblings being allowed entry via placing requests into P1.

I have approached the Director of Education Maureen McKenna to ask where my daughter is on the waiting list however the reply is that I must wait for the appeal and I have been given no insight into my chances of getting my daughter into school.

I have been to visit Sadie Docherty the Lord Provost of Glasgow at her surgery and she has too advised me that I must wait for the appeal although she is writing to the Board in support of my appeal.

I have a twitter account "sibling rights" and I have tweeted Michael Russell, who advised me to wait for the appeal, Glasgow City Council and Lord Jack McConnell (who did not reply).

Petition background information

The upper limit of Class sizes was reduced to 25 by The Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010.

There is no policy in relation to siblings placement. Guidelines are that the following criteria are applicable: Medical grounds of child, Lone parent/carer, distance, suitability of particular teaching methods, Religious ethos and Siblings (brother/sister currently attending the school, however nowhere does it state that it is a high risk strategy to expect family members to be accepted into the same school.

A recruitment policy is necessary now to deliver the class size number 18 in August and to alleviate the issue of children being separated from families as they enter into their first year of education in Scotland.

As decisions to reject the placing requests has been based on the fact that councils would need to employ further teachers, then my answer is "do so."

There are 50 places in Primary One of Battlefield Primary in Glasgow, there are 7 siblings who have been rejected. This equates to three classes of 19 assuming there is no movement as the council is not in a position to come or go over the number 25.

Whether the appeal is successful or not, there are scores of parents in a similar situation across the city and the country. Class size capacity has been compressed in the local schools however now that the siblings come of age for school, suddenly the reality is that having a sibling as the reason for a placing request is a high risk strategy. Notwithstanding the fact that unless the average number 18 is delivered quickly, I myself have a 3 year old who is going to make me repeat the whole process in two years' time. 25% of probationer teachers were not employed into the profession last year. - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/920/0120759.PDF> so the resource is available to employ further staff.

Scores of Scottish children face the prospect of being forced into schools away from siblings in North Glasgow, Lanarkshire across the South side of Glasgow. Tinto Primary, Mount Florida Primary, Merrylee and the following warning was given by the Scottish Children's Parent council: However, Eileen Prior, executive director of the SPTC, said there was no evidence 25 made a difference to teaching quality.

"We have long challenged the value of the Government's class size policy because there is little or no substantive research which demonstrates that reducing the number of children in a class to 25 will make any significant difference to outcomes for those children," she said.

"While most people would instinctively support the notion of a lower pupil to teacher ratio, the policy as it currently stands, makes little or no difference to the experience of most children – but it has had unintended consequences.

"Placing requests – particularly in the first year of primary – have been made increasingly difficult and this has been further exacerbated by the population growth we are experiencing."

Ms Prior said the situation could be confusing to parents who had siblings at the school or whose child attended the associated nursery.

Parents will be forced to move or quit jobs to cope with multiple addresses for delivery of children.

Continuity cannot be guaranteed for holidays, in service days and parent nights across different schools in different regions, never mind the dangers of leaving 5 and 6 year olds alone in the playground in Winter darkness or broad daylight.

Continuity in Education is vital for learning as are the basic needs of feeling confident and emotionally stable which cannot be achieved if children are reduced to waiting

alone in the playground for school to start. Support for homework which forms a large part of the education process will be diminished as parents struggle with the time management associated with displaced children.

The number of births registered in Scotland in 2008 was 60,041. There have been increases each year since 2002, and the total for 2008 was 2,260 (4 per cent) more than in 2007, and the highest number since 1995. Coupled with a class size reduction, this has led to the side effect of the volume of siblings being rejected from primary schools.

Dr Douglas McKenzie wrote in the Herald Glasgow about the evidence from both the UK and elsewhere that lower class sizes do improve educational outcomes for children, which is most marked in the early primary years (1-3) and how the size of the effect will be smaller at 25 than it would be at the better target level of 18 and may not be significant when compared to a class of over 30 (though there would be a marked difference between 20 and 18).

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/p1eighteen>

Related information for petition

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/323309/0104120.pdf>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-20754750>

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/2645/1/SB11-09.pdf>

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/parents-group-warns-policy-on-class-size-limits-school-choices.21057134>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

21 / 06 / 2013

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Is there a feedback mechanism from birth and migration rates information in Scotland into the Education authority?

Has the issue of dark winter mornings/clock changes been considered when 5 year

olds have been displaced into separate schools?

Should placing requests to accompany siblings into schools of choice not be highlighted in red as "high risk strategies" for parents?

Could each council not facilitate better planning for sibling requests by requesting information about family members likely to want to join same schools in the future?