10th May, 2021

Dear

Many congratulations on your election to the Scottish Parliament. I am writing, as one of your constituents and a supporter of Upstart Scotland, to ask you to press the Scottish government for **a review of the *Curriculum for Excellence* ‘early level’ (3-6 years), led by specialists in early years education.**

In the closing days of the last Parliament, a bill was passed for incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law. I earnestly hope that (despite current activity on behalf of the Westminster government), the UNCRC will soon be ratified as law. General Comment 7 of the UNCRC defines early childhood as birth to eight years, as does Scotland’s Early Years Framework.

However, due to Scotland’s very early school starting age, pedagogical practice in most P1 and P2 classrooms is still very much focused on achievement in the three Rs, and even in many nurseries. This ‘schoolification’ of early childhood has been exacerbated by the introduction of the Scottish National Standardised Assessment in literacy and numeracy, starting at P1, and the accompanying ‘benchmarks’ for achievement.

In February 2020, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government published new practice guidance for early years (including early level) called *Realising the Ambition: Being Me.* This document was written by early years specialists and so promotes developmentally appropriate early years pedagogy – relationship-centred, play-based and, as often as possible, outdoors. Many P1/2 teachers and nursery practitioners) have told Upstart of their deep frustration at the conflict between *Realising the Ambition* and demands from local authority officials/senior management teams for more ‘schoolified’ classroom practice, and focused teaching of specific literacy and numeracy skills.

Last year Upstart produced a book, *Play is the Way*, to support the aims of *Realising the Ambition* and sent a copy to every MSP and Director of Education (copies are currently being sent to newly-elected MSPs). I was very pleased to note, during Beatrice Wishart’s Member’s Debate about a kindergarten stage on 9-3-21 and Upstart’s hustings event on 24-4-21, that *Play is the Way* appears to have been widely read. The inclusion of a kindergarten stage in the manifestos of three political parties is a clear indication that Scotland now leads the way among English-speaking countries in recognising the profound importance of developmentally appropriate care and education for the under-sevens.

Please press the Scottish Government to commission, as a matter of urgency, a **review of ‘early level’ – led by early years specialists.**

Thank you for your time and my very best wishes for the forthcoming Parliamentary session.

Yours sincerely,