**Motion to the Scottish Parliament by Kaukab Stewart MSP, to be proposed in Spring 2024**

That the Parliament notes the body of international evidence of the benefits of play-based early years education; believes that active, social play is a natural learning drive that helps develop physical fitness, social skills, cognitive capacities and personal qualities; understands that Scotland and the UK are outliers in Europe in starting formal education at four or five years of age; consider that, since international PISA comparisons began, countries with later school starting ages have performed better than those with earlier starts; notes that the United Nations defines early childhood as being from birth to eight years of age, and understands that Scottish research has established that there are significant differences in children’s levels of development at age five; commends the work of organisations, such as Upstart Scotland, in promoting the needs of children early years education based on relationship-centred, child-led, play-based environments, with a greater focus on outdoor learning; notes the belief that a universal play-based kindergarten stage, with a raised formal school starting age, could contribute to closing the attainment gap and be a significant anti-poverty measure and that it would help provide a true level playing field for all of Scotland’s children, including those in the Glasgow Kelvin constituency, giving every child time to develop the skills and capacities that underpin educational success, improving long-term outcomes and giving every child the best start in life, and further notes the belief that there is a need for a national conversation on early years education to consider a later school-start age preceded by a relationship-centred, play-based kindergarten stage to support optimal development during early childhood and ensure secure foundations, and that such a conversation should be open to all who wish to contribute, including early years practitioners, parents, teachers, academics and children, as well as policy-makers.