

Schools encouraged to take 2-year-olds to tackle childcare crisis

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EXCERPTS:

Schools will be encouraged to take children as young as two to help solve the country's child care crisis.

Liz Truss, the education minister, is writing to every council in England to suggest that school nurseries should extend their opening hours to allow parents to leave toddlers during the working day.

The Government is also introducing legislation to reduce red tape and make it easier for schools to open their doors to two-year-olds.

Ministers believe that opening up the system will help provide tens of thousands more child care places, which are urgently needed in many areas.

It will also enable mothers to go back into part-time work and help prevent children from disadvantaged backgrounds from slipping behind.

The move is the latest attempt by the Government to increase access to child care after a Conservative initiative to allow nannies to look after more children was blocked by the Liberal Democrats.

Mrs Truss told The Telegraph: "Schools have excellent facilities. It is age appropriate, so what you are doing with two-year-olds in terms of singing, reading stories, playing with paint is very different from what you do with a seven-year-old.

"If you have a really high quality school nursery, children who are behind can catch up with their peers by the time they start school."

By the end of this year, 40 per cent of all two-year-olds - equivalent to 130,000 children from poorer backgrounds - will be entitled to 15 hours of free care a week. Middle-class parents will have to pay for the service.

-reprinted from the Telegraph

Region: Europe [2]

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