

Dear ACT Standing Committee

Please accept my submission into the Inquiry into school closures and reform of the ACT education system as a parent of a 2009 ACT pre-schooler.

Deakin preschool was affected by the ACT government's education reform in that it was amalgamated into Forrest Primary School. The recommendation made in this submission is based on my experience as a parent with the pre-school system thus far.

My daughter has really enjoyed the pre-school environment and loves attending Deakin pre-school. She also attends childcare and the difference between the two is vast. So much more learning (in a play-based way) has been achieved at pre-school and the interaction between parents and children is much more friendly and relaxed. The children are forming strong friendships seemingly because there is a different environment to childcare and the parents are working together in the form of the Preschool Parents Association which seems a great way to strengthen links into the community.

I would like to list some of the advantages and disadvantages of the amalgamation into the Forrest primary school:

Advantages of the amalgamation

- The primary school pays for the preschool to be cleaned everyday.
- There are development opportunities for the preschool teacher.
- Support from primary school in terms of provision of relief staff however, the staff are not necessarily early childhood trained and the primary school curriculum differs substantially to the play-based curriculum of preschool.
- Good relationship with the primary school which has not provided any barriers to the preschool's autonomy (so far). If the primary school had not been so accommodating in allowing the preschool to operate in the traditional way there may have been some negative ramifications for the preschool.
- The amalgamation has provided a seemingly easier transition into the linked primary school for those children progressing to the Kindergarten.
- There is better communication between the preschool and school about the children flowing from the preschool into the primary school, although this was done before.

Disadvantages of amalgamation

- Preschool assistant has no established peer support network, whereas the preschool teacher is supported quite well.
- Preschool teacher must attend primary school meetings twice weekly where the preschool features minimally if at all. These extra hours place an extra burden on the preschool teachers
- There is a lot of confusion and misinformation circulating with regard to the way finances of the preschool are to be managed by the school/preschool.

Recommendations from my experience

From speaking with parents from other Preschool Parent Associations, Deakin preschool has been quite lucky in terms of having a fairly good working relationship with the overarching primary school. However, luck should not have to play a part. I suggest that the Government work to implement ways of safeguarding the autonomy of viable preschools who wish to remain autonomous. In the current climate it seems all too easy for the primary school to engulf the preschool.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission.

Yours sincerely

Miranda Davis