

**Parents of the Convent of Mercy Nursery School response to the draft
Special Education Needs Framework Consultation**

The parents of the Convent of Mercy Nursery School welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. We appreciate the focus of this consultation and the attempt to focus on the child. However during this time of global pandemic and “business critical only” operations in schools, the timing of this consultation remains ill advised and reckless.

This is potentially the largest consultation ever launched by the Department of Education and the workload of assessing and commenting on the many sections is substantial. The parent of the Convent of Mercy Nursery School call for this consultation to be delayed for at least one year so that the proposed SEN Framework can be discussed face to face in professional forums of school principals and therefore give them appropriate time to consult and consider the implications in full.

Nevertheless, the parents would like to draw the attention of the Department of Education to the following issues:-

- **Early Identification of children’s special educational / additional needs:** there is no doubt that children with SEN should be identified as quickly as possible – they often are once they get to school, but the problem is that timescale to gather evidence and complete the referral process is lengthy.
- **There is an urgent need to review and address the lack of special school placements in the South Down area.** It is not acceptable that local children have to attend Special school placements in Belfast and further afield.