

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**22 May 2019**

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**Alison Lenton-Jinks – Statement regarding agenda item 6  
Specials Schools Consultation**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

**Statement**

I am here today to talk to you all about the negative psychological effect that Wiltshire Council's proposal of the one School of Excellence has had on the families, friends, but most importantly on our SEND children. We at St Nicholas school in Chippenham were led into a false sense of security last July 2018 when we met with Alan Stubberfield thinking that our voices and suggestions had been heard and that our school had been saved; unlike Larkrise who saw through the lies and promises that were made and started a petition to save their school from closure. We then were told in September 2018 that St Nicholas was definitely under threat of closure and thanks to some parents, who have strength of character to know what is right and just for our children, we then started the fight to save our school.

After the very disappointing outcome of the November 2018 meeting, both Larkrise and St Nicholas' parents joined forces to try and help Wiltshire Council to see sense, to understand our children's needs collectively and individually, plus still giving our children freedom of choice, the same as mainstream children and families have- not the belief that Wiltshire Council have that "one size fits all!"

As everyone who is here today is aware, we decided to take Wiltshire Council to court and won a Judicial review that Wiltshire Council decided to settle out of court, leading to the pre-consultation meetings where, once again, we were led to believe our ideas and proposals would be taken on board and put forward to the cabinet today, but after reading Helen Jones' document that she submitted to you we now realise this is not the case.

The psychological impact this has on us as parents, as our children's voices, is beyond comprehension. We, as SEND parents, already have had to fight to achieve the right level of support and care for our children, going through the process of attaining EHCPs that provide our children's needs, filling in Disability Living Allowance forms where we have to list all that our children can not do because of their disabilities, which in turn highlights the fact they aren't like neurotypical children, making us feel inadequate as parents. But this makes us fight even more- for our children's right for choice, their right to be heard, their right to be treated the same

way as neurotypical mainstream children, their right to live in their local community where inclusion and educating society is vital, not only for our SEND children but for everyone else as well! Our children face enough challenges without Wiltshire Council adding to the fact that they want to close down St Nicholas, Larkrise and Rowdeford Schools, where they all have a sense of belonging, not only at their schools but within their local communities, which help with their self-esteem and identity (please refer to belonging paper).

Our children belong to their communities, their schools, their friends, their wider family networks, as that is what we are- a family that care for each other, support and love each other, and help each other through the good times and the bad! We live every minute, hour, day, week, month, year with our children and requirements and needs- we laugh with them, we celebrate their successes no matter how big or small they are, we feel their pain, we cry with them. We are nurse, maid, doctor, driver, cook, advocate, friend, carer, but most importantly we are the parents to these wonderful, unique, fabulous children that you want to hide away in an "institution" in the countryside with no means of walking to their local park or shop, as well as segregating them in "hubs" where they won't be able to interact with their peers. How can you tell me that this won't affect their emotional and emotional wellbeing, let alone ours? We at St Nicholas just had our annual whole school spring show, where we can all get together and see how well our children are interacting with each other and their environment- this will not be achievable in a "superschool", as there will be too many pupils, TA's, teachers, staff members and parents to try and fit in one hall.

We have just lost a young boy at St Nicks- our 3<sup>rd</sup> in a year- how can you look us in the eyes and say that our children are only pound signs to you? We all feel the pain when a child dies but even more so for our SEND community, as we know how hard all our children have it, how special all the friends they make are, and the fact that they can not understand when one of their friends dies (my son has been especially affected by the recent death). How dare you for your lack of knowledge and understanding belittle our children to mere money. God forbid any of you have to deal with a special needs child in your family, then maybe you will understand the hurt, anger, and betrayal we all feel as Wiltshire Council and the cabinet members were never really interested in hearing our thoughts or involving us in the final outcome of this. I, for one, hope you can live with yourselves, and the consequences of your actions. We are fighters. We will continue to fight for what is right and just for our SEND children and we won't be going away until we help you to understand just how wonderful all our children are and how different all their needs are. I hope you are prepared!