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Media Release

Primary School Places Crisis

The Secretary of State has admitted that many families of children beginning school will find it difficult if not impossible to secure the admission of their son or daughter to their chosen local school. **Recent studies have shown that a quarter of primaries are either full or overcrowded.** More than 55,000 children are affected, there is a shortage of more than 200 classes.

There have been years of government neglect of the primary sector. The damaging rise in the number of classes where there is increasing difficulty in providing the individual help which is so vitally important to making sound progress has been ignored by coalition ministers.

This association has to point out that overcrowding is not a problem which has crept up on us unexpectedly. **The birthrate has been climbing steadily over recent years and it should be a perfectly simple matter to calculate the number of school places required when the newborn children reach school age.** Since 2010 more than a quarter of a million additional children have had to be accommodated in their primary schools.

It is time we looked at our financial priorities for education. If we are serious about remedying the widening attainment gap between many poor children and the rest --- and there is not a single teacher or parent of a primary child who is not serious about that --- then we must invest more in the primary system. By eleven years old it is too late for far too many children, only a minority will overcome their disadvantages while in secondary school.

High and realistic expectations of success are vital to learning but count for little if the classroom is too crowded for children to receive the individual attention and teaching focused on personal need which is every child's birthright.

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