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The Champion Centre
TAMARIKI TOIORA

BUILDING FUTURES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

5 June 2014

To whom it may concern:

As the Ministry of Education works to make the best use of the expertise residing in Christchurch's Special Schools (Allenvale, Ferndale and Waitaha Learning Centre), the Champion Centre would like to add its voice to the current debate around location of those resources.

The aim of all education is to provide for the needs of individual children and to do so in a way that is as inclusive as possible, allowing children and young people to grow and develop within their local communities. Parents of children with disabilities are often faced with competing priorities of choosing a school that meets their child's educational needs while at the same time wanting their child to be able to form friendships and social groups in their local area. This is not a choice that most other parents face and it should be a matter of human dignity that children with disabilities have the same range of choices as other children. We believe that increasing the integration of specialist teaching knowledge and skill into mainstream schooling can encourage better outcomes for children with disabilities. And if this can be achieved through co-location of specialist education providers with mainstream schools, then we are supportive of this move.

However, to be successful, co-location options must respect the choices parents make on behalf of their children and must meet the needs of each individual child to reach their full potential. It must foster the development of meaningful relationships between mainstream teachers and those who staff special school units and provide not just for the presence of students with disabilities, but for a meaningful level of their participation and learning in the mainstream settings as well. Co-location is not enough by itself; it must enhance children's potential and ways of learning.

Sincerely,

Dr Susan Foster Cohen
Director



