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Declaration

We, the members of the Sudbury School Ammersee Advisory Board, deplore the decision of the Regional Government of Upper Bavaria to withhold further approval for the school. By means of this declaration we wish to express our **urgent recommendation** that the school should continue operation.

The Sudbury School Ammersee is based on the Sudbury school model that was developed nearly 50 years ago in Sudbury Valley, near Boston, Massachusetts, and since then has been very successfully implemented at the original school there, as well as in many other schools that have been founded in democratic countries across the world. There are also very many other democratic schools with a similar ethos in many countries, for example in Spain and England.

The success of Sudbury schools has proven to be independent of the dominant culture of the respective country, be that Israel, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Germany or of course the United States.

So it is clear that the kind of education that is taking place at the Sudbury School Ammersee is not some hare-brained experiment, but the implementation of a thoroughly thought-through, well matured, often tested and highly successful concept.

What is driving this development, whose roots go back way beyond the founding of Sudbury Valley School fifty years ago, but which is now clearly experiencing a major surge of public interest? What is so especially relevant about it today, in 2016?

The age of information confronts today's societies and the pupils within them with entirely new challenges. It is evident that education systems in many countries are struggling to meet these challenges. They are unable to provide pupils with the skills, knowledge and personal stability that they will need in their coming adulthood. Capabilities that appear necessary today may have become irrelevant by tomorrow. People's paths through life are far more individual than they were in previous times. This means that it is simply no longer possible for a school with a fixed curriculum and the extremely restricted learning content that this entails, and an attitude that maintains belief in the possibility of predicting future requirements, to provide adequate support for young people.

In contrast to this, Sudbury schools provide an environment in which pupils have ample opportunity to find out about themselves and their capacities, to develop and intensively pursue fields of interest and enquiry, to develop their personalities, as well as to experience genuine democratic processes at first hand instead of merely reading about them in books. They receive the most adequate preparation for life after school that is currently possible, because they hone precisely those skills and talents that they will need later: decision-making skills, self-determined acquisition of knowledge, the power to appraise situations, social skills within a community, the use of and shaping of democratic structures, etc.

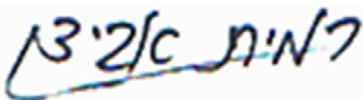
Sudbury schools are schools of the 21st century; they are located directly at the cutting edge of human progress. Considering the extent to which the Sudbury School Ammersee differs from other schools in Germany, the Regional Government of Upper Bavaria displayed foresight and enterprise in giving approval – and we would like to take this opportunity to express our own heartfelt approval of this. We energetically call for a reversal of the decision not to extend the approval, especially as it is far too early to draw rational, objective conclusions regarding the school's success in implementing its own concept, as expressly required in the initial approval documents. We are sure that the Regional Government and the Free State of Bavaria will be witness to such success in the coming years and

decades, and they will have every justification in claiming part of that success for themselves. It is simply not possible that the Sudbury School Ammersee can fail to make a significant and beneficial contribution to society and to the continuing development of a humane educational environment in Bavaria. A large amount of initial evidence that this is the case is already available.

It is always problematical, albeit a very common phenomenon, when innovative processes and projects are subjected to outdated methods of appraisal. This principle applies in particular to the Sudbury School Ammersee. In view of its constitution and *modus operandi*, it is quite simply pointless to appraise it according to conventional and largely irrelevant criteria. Appraisal methods based on the assumption of frontal teaching, particularized curricula and stifling schedules, methods that leave complex and often invisible learning processes as well as individual inclinations woefully out of account, cannot do justice to what is happening in such a school. This state of affairs is compounded when those responsible are also prepared to ignore the obvious shortcomings of conventional ways.

The school and those responsible for it are fully aware of the need for and value of external appraisal and supervision, and they welcome it as a means of demonstrating the efficacy of the underlying concept. However, for this to succeed the methods must be appropriate and the inspectors must be experienced and suitably qualified, for instance through having spent a considerable period of time in a democratic school environment and having engaged in intensive study of its principles. The constructive way forward is to take account of changing social, political and technological circumstances, circumstances which are demanding and, fortunately, also getting a new kind of school that reflects corresponding developments in educational institutions and administration.

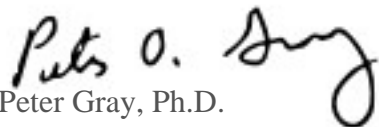
Placing obstacles in this path, or even attempting to block it entirely, would amount to a disastrous mistake. The way in which education happens in a Sudbury school is not only entirely in tune with the findings of modern science, but also with what is already being put into daily practice in people-oriented social, political and economic scenarios. This type of education secures the future. Sooner or later there will prove to be no viable alternative.



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