



Department for Education

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education

Chair of the Education Select Committee
Helen Hayes MP
By email: educom@parliament.uk

22 October 2025

Dear Helen,

I am writing to thank you for your report published last month, [Solving the SEND Crisis](#), and to provide an update on my department's next steps.

You rightly point to a system that requires decisive, long-term change and emphasise that reforms must rebuild the trust and confidence of children, young people, and families. I agree that we must move towards a system where high quality support is provided as soon as a need is identified, rather than only once an EHC plan is in place, and that responding to the needs of children with SEND must become an intrinsic part of the mainstream system, rather than something additional. Your report contains a number of thoughtful recommendations which my department is considering carefully, and I also want to ensure we're able to fully consider recent publications from the Children's Commissioner and organisations including IPPR and Sutton Trust. We will respond in full to your report in due course.

It will be crucial to build a consensus around the reforms we want to bring. My ministers and I have been engaging extensively with families and experts over recent months – and Minister Georgia Gould is now at the forefront of that work. Through that engagement we have made a great deal of progress on plans to build a truly inclusive system. We have already:

- Created new places in special schools, collectively creating 10,000 new school places for children with SEND, as part of a £740m capital investment to deliver adaptations and expand specialist units in mainstream settings.
- Invested in multi-million-pound programmes, such as Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) and Early Language Support for Every Child (ELSEC), that bring together central and local government, schools and parents to test and learn new ways to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Updated inspection frameworks so Ofsted will hold leaders to account for inclusion. For the first time, they have set out an explicit focus on inclusion in their new framework, gathering evidence on factors from school culture to assessment of need.

To help us deliver the most effective set of reforms we can, I have taken the decision to have a further period of co-creation, testing our proposals with the people who matter most in this reform – the families – alongside teachers and other experts as you highlight in the Select Committee’s report. We will bring forward a full Schools White Paper early in the new year, underpinned by our belief that high standards and inclusion are two sides of the same coin.

Through this period of co-creation with parents, educators, experts and representative organisations, we will test policy options being considered and seek views through listening sessions in every region of the country, and fortnightly Ministerial meetings with key parent and expert groups. We will publicise these events clearly across the department’s channels to ensure that we reach as many people as possible. This builds on the constructive dialogue we have already undertaken, which has helped inform the principles guiding our approach. I will continue to listen directly to those working within the system, ensuring that our policy development is grounded in lived experience and fosters a culture of shared learning and constructive challenge.

Our SEND reforms will be underpinned by the five principles below. I hope that by sharing these now I can provide some clarity on the direction of our approach, and generate debate about how we can meet the objective that your report outlines and that I share: *“a reform programme which will put children and young people with SEND back at the centre of our education system, and in doing so, deliver benefits for the system as a whole”*.

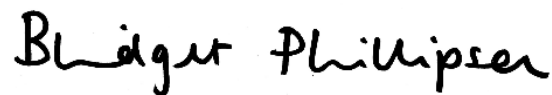
Principles for SEND reform

1. **Early.** Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. This will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse, instead intervening upstream, earlier in children’s lives when this can have most impact.
2. **Local.** Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with the most complex needs.
3. **Fair.** Every school should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children in mainstream, special or Alternative Provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.
4. **Effective.** Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children.

5. **Shared.** Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children.

In the coming weeks, Professor Becky Francis will publish the Curriculum and Assessment Review, and the government will publish its response. In it we will set out how we will ensure every child and young person, including those with SEND, receives a high-quality education supported by a curriculum that gives them the knowledge and skills they need to thrive and adapt in the future.

I am acutely aware that our reforms to SEND are some of the most critical this Government will deliver, and that is why it is so essential that we take the time to listen and get it right. I am more determined than ever to transform a system that is letting down our children and look forward to continuing to work with you as we move towards publication of our plans. Given the interest in this topic, I intend to make this letter public. Thank you once again for your important intervention.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget Phillipson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education