



Permanent Secretary

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Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Wednesday 4th November 2020

Treasury Minute response to 1st Report, Session 2019-21
Support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities

Thank you for your letter of 7 October about your Committee's report on support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Government is committed to improving how the SEND system operates, which will improve support for one of our most vulnerable groups. The SEND Review is considering how to ensure that support is consistent, high quality, and integrated across education, health and care.

You commented on the timetable for completing the review. We have prioritised our response to the Covid-19 pandemic in recent months, including addressing the immediate impact on children with SEND. The wider education and care sector has done the same, which has understandably impacted on their capacity to engage with the review. The review will therefore take longer than originally expected, but I absolutely agree with you that we should complete this work as soon as is practically possible.

You also commented on the Timpson Review of school exclusion. The Government supports head teachers to maintain safe and orderly environments for all pupils and staff in their schools. Exclusion is an essential tool, but permanent exclusion should always be a last resort.

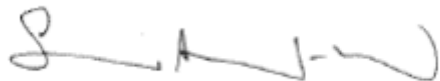
The Government agrees with Edward Timpson's conclusion that there is no 'right' level of exclusion that we should aim for. He noted that exclusion rates must be considered in the context in which the decisions to exclude are made. The statutory exclusion guidance emphasises that, wherever possible, heads should avoid excluding a child with an Education, Health and Care plan.

Where a school has concerns about a pupil's behaviour, schools should intervene early (and give consideration to a multi-agency assessment) to reduce the need for a subsequent exclusion.

The Government is implementing an ambitious programme of action on school behaviour, exclusion and reform of alternative provision. This includes revisiting the behaviour and exclusion guidance, which will support schools to use the current framework in the best way possible, and developing guidance on those parts of the system where schools are seeking more clarity, such as managed moves.

Ministers and officials in my Department will keep Parliament updated and involved as we deliver this important work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Acland-Hood', written in a cursive style.

SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD
PERMANENT SECRETARY