



Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for School Standards

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df

To all members of the Education Select Committee

17 December 2024

Dear Helen,

The government has today introduced the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to the House of Commons. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is a key step towards delivering the government's Opportunity Mission to break the link between young people's background and their future success. It will put in place a package of support to drive high and rising standards throughout our education and care systems so that every child can achieve and thrive. It will protect children at risk of abuse, stopping vulnerable children falling through cracks in services, and deliver a core guarantee of high standards with space for innovation in every child's education.

The ambitions of the Bill are set out in seven key parts:

- Making a child-centred government
- Keeping families together and children safe
- Supporting children in the care system to thrive
- Cracking down on excessive profit making
- Driving high and rising standards for every child
- Removing barriers to opportunity in schools
- Creating a safer and higher quality education system for every child

The measures in this Bill will deliver on manifesto and Opportunity Mission commitments:

- **Make a child-centred government** by enabling children with complex needs and who are at risk of or need to be deprived of their liberty to be placed in community provision; strengthening Ofsted's powers in relation to children's social care providers by giving them the power to issue fines for breaches of the Care Standards Act 2000, including to unregistered providers, and enabling them to hold provider groups to account for quality issues in the provision of care; limiting the use of agency workers in children's social care; and protecting 16 and 17 year olds from ill-treatment or wilful neglect.

- **Keep families together and children safe** by mandating local authorities to offer family group decision making so that all families have an opportunity to form a plan of family-led care, improving information sharing across and within agencies, strengthening the role of education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and implementing multi-agency child protection teams.
- **Support children in the care system to thrive** by requiring local authorities to publish their local offer for children in kinship care and their carers, extending the virtual school head role to children in kinship care and those with a social worker, and strengthening our offer of support for care leavers by requiring local authorities to provide 'Staying Close' support to eligible care leavers where their welfare requires it – this gives support to help find and keep suitable accommodation and access services – and requiring local authorities to publish the arrangements it has in place to support and assist care leavers in their transition to adulthood and independent living.
- **Crack down on excessive profit making** including a backstop law to give the government a new power to cap the profit providers can make should that be necessary; supporting the creation of regional care co-operatives to improve the forecasting and commissioning of placements; establishing a financial oversight scheme to increase financial and corporate transparency of 'difficult to replace' care providers and their corporate owners.
- **Driving high and rising standards for every child** by establishing core national standards on which schools will be able to build and around which they can innovate, by delivering on commitments on school admissions, qualified teacher status and the national curriculum. Further measures include proposals for all types of new schools, ending the academies presumption in favour of prioritising any local offer which meets the needs of children and families.
- **Remove barriers to opportunity in schools** by delivering manifesto commitments on providing access to free breakfast clubs for every primary school child and limiting the number of branded uniform items that schools can require.
- **Create a safer and higher quality education system for every child** by introducing Children Not In School registers to help ensure no child falls through the gaps when educated not in school. To help protect children who are most vulnerable, parents will have to obtain local authority consent to home educate if a child is subject to s47 enquiry of Children Act 1989 or under a child protection plan. It will also extend the registration requirements, already in place for independent schools, to more Independent Educational Institutions which could be expected to provide all or the majority of a child's education and make changes to improve arrangements for the regulation and inspection of independent schools; and the consideration of cases of serious teacher misconduct to make sure help can be mobilised for every child that needs it.

Our policy statement, '[Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive](#)' set out in November provides further information on the policy detail for the Children's Social Care measures.

The extent of all provisions of the Bill (except Part 3) is England and Wales, and all the provisions of the Bill apply in England only.

Part 3 (General Provisions) extends UK-wide and the LCM process is not engaged as the provisions are reserved or (in relation to consequential amendments) are either reserved or have a reserved purpose.

The measures contained within the Bill address all these principles and further detail on them is set out in the annex to this letter. To accompany the Bill, the Government will publish policy summary notes on GOV.UK, which will provide a summary of each measure in more detail. We will share these with you before Christmas recess to support the understanding and scrutiny of this legislation.

Should you have any questions regarding the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, please do not hesitate to contact me as the lead Minister for the Bill or our officials who can be contacted on the following email address: legislation.division@education.gov.uk. We are keen to work closely with the Education Select Committee and I hope to have your support as we begin to break down barriers to opportunity for children and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Catherine McKinnell
Minister for School Standards



Education Committee

From the Chair
Helen Hayes MP

Catherine McKinnell MP

Minister of State for School Standards
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

18 December 2024

Dear Catherine,

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Thank you for your letter received yesterday, 17 December 2024, subsequent to the presentation of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to Parliament.

The Education Committee convened yesterday morning to hear oral evidence to its inquiry into Children's Social Care – an area on which the proposed legislation will have a significant impact – and was taken aback to find that no embargoed press notice regarding the Bill had been provided to us.

It is extremely disappointing that the Department chose not to share this crucial information with the Committee, especially given its widespread coverage in the media ahead of the Committee's meeting, and the relevance of the topic to the Committee's evidence session. This omission is particularly disconcerting in light of the Department's consistent communication on other matters.

During my introductory meetings with you, your ministerial colleagues, and officials, I specifically inquired about the timeline of this Bill. I expressed the Committee's eagerness to engage with this significant piece of legislation, which would have benefited from pre-legislative scrutiny. The Bill presented yesterday is considerably more extensive than previously indicated, reflected in the expanded title.

The Committee has directed me to express formally our profound dissatisfaction with the Department's engagement on this matter.

The Committee is set to meet senior officials at the Department on 7 January. In light of the accelerated pace of this legislation's progression, we request that the Bill team be made available to brief us on the Bill during this visit.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is an important piece of legislation which seeks to address some of the significant challenges children and families are currently facing. The Committee will take a close interest in the Bill and we are looking at how we can move at pace to undertake meaningful scrutiny within the limited time available to us.

We remain committed to collaborating to ensure that the Bill achieves outstanding outcomes for children across the country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Hayes', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Helen Hayes MP
Chair, Education Committee



Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for School Standards

Department for Education Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df

Helen Hayes MP

By email: educationclerks@parliament.uk

27 December 2024

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

I am grateful to you and the Education Committee for your engagement on this and look forward to working with you on these matters. I am committed to ensuring that the Committee can fully engage with, and scrutinise, the Bill during its passage through Parliament.

I have arranged that the Bill team will join during your meeting with Department for Education officials on 7 January.

This is a landmark piece of legislation, on which we have been working at pace, that puts children's best interests into law and breaks down barriers to opportunity. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Bill delivers on the ambition which this government has for our children and young people, and which I know you share.

Yours,

Catherine McKinnell MP
Minister for School Standards