



**The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education**

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Debbie Abrahams MP

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23 February 2026

Dear Debbie,

Schools White Paper and SEND Consultation: our vision for reform

I am writing to inform the Committee that today the government has published two significant documents: our schools white paper: *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* and the accompanying SEND Consultation: *Putting Children and Young People First*. Together, these set out our plans to build an education system that supports every child to achieve and thrive, and where inclusion and high standards are two sides of the same coin.

Every Child Achieving and Thriving builds on progress the government has already made to rebuild public services for children and families – from Best Start Family Hubs to early intervention in family support and tackling child poverty. We know that in the absence of other local services schools have stepped up time and again to support our young people, but they should not feel isolated in responding to the challenges families face. Our plans will wrap adaptable and responsive services around children and families to actively support healthy, happy childhoods, addressing barriers and strengthening collaboration across all local services.

Building on these foundations, we will deliver a high quality, inclusive education for every child recognising these are two sides of the same coin. We will deliver this through three key shifts in the school system.

We will take children's experience of education **from narrow to broad**, ensuring schools provide children with a rich education. We will ensure children who have been **sidelined by the system for too long are included**, as part of a system that delivers high standards for all. This will tackle the attainment gaps we see for disadvantaged children, especially white working-class children, children with SEND, and those who are performing well but are capable of more. We will move from **children and communities withdrawing from schools to engaging with them**, in a system where they feel connected, supported and safe, rebuilding the fractured relationship between families and schools, enabling high expectations for behaviour, attendance and attainment for all our children.

To achieve these shifts, we will strengthen the foundations of our education system. We will support and invest in high quality staff and enable schools to act as anchors in their communities supporting them to collaborate with each other through a trust model. We will also drive innovation and ambition through system led improvement and realising the opportunities from data, AI and technology.

Transformative change for our country requires bold ambition for our children, which is why the white paper sets a long-term aspiration to improve attainment at the end of key stage 4. When the generation of children born under this government finish secondary school, it is our ambition that all children are stretched to achieve higher standards and the disadvantage gap will be halved.

To truly deliver a system in which all children achieve and thrive, we must ensure every child receives the right support at the right time, including children with SEND. Over the past 18 months, we have held wide ranging engagement with children, parents, professionals and representative organisations and Parliamentarians, including through the SEND National Conversation launched in December, which reached over 8,000 people.

Your Committee has consistently highlighted the connections between disability, poverty and long-term outcomes, including the impact that delays in assessment and support have on families' economic stability and parents' ability to remain in work. You have drawn attention to the need for clear and supported post-16 pathways, stronger routes into employment, and better alignment across education, health and DWP so that young people with SEND can transition successfully into adulthood. These themes are reflected in our proposals. Our reforms intend to strengthen early identification and early support in mainstream settings to reduce escalation and the burden on families; protect and reinforce statutory rights by improving EHCP quality and consistency; and expand high quality post-16 pathways, including Supported Internships, Foundation Apprenticeships and clearer transition planning.

We will improve access to timely professional input through our new Experts at Hand offer – a local service in every area which will make access to education and health professionals, such as speech and language therapists or educational psychologists, readily available to schools, backed by £1.8 billion over three years and £200 million to enable local authorities to establish this service working with ICBs and local partners. Alongside expanding Inclusion Bases, and strengthening expectations across all settings, we aim to relieve pressures that force families into economic hardship and ensure young people with SEND are better prepared for education, employment and independent adult life.

Building on these commitments, our wider SEND reforms set out a more consistent

and coherent system of support. We are introducing National Inclusion Standards and updating the SEND Code of Practice to clarify expectations and strengthen universal evidence-based practice in every mainstream nursery, school and college. This strengthening of mainstream practice will be backed through £1.6 billion in a new Inclusive Mainstream Fund provided over 3 years. This will come alongside a new three-layered support model. Targeted support and Targeted Plus support will enable schools to deliver interventions such as small group teaching and to draw on the new Experts at Hand service. We are deepening parental partnership with new Individual Support Plans developed with parents and children, and more funding for SENDIASS and parent carer forums, while improving early years and post-16 support through simplified funding, dedicated inclusion resource and smoother transitions, ensuring that children and young people receive joined up support throughout their education and into adulthood.

The changes come alongside the already announced £3.7 billion capital investment to create 60,000 school places for children with SEND by 2029/30 across special schools, alternative provision and ensuring every secondary school has an inclusion base so children with SEND are supported to thrive in local mainstream schools.

We are now moving into the next phase of this work: the formal consultation on SEND reforms. Our proposals set out a clear and ambitious plan for a system that works for all children and young people. To get this right, we need to continue hearing directly from those with lived and professional experience. The consultation opens today and will remain open for 12 weeks.

This is an ambitious vision that we recognise will take collaboration, sustained and determined action over time. That is why we will work with schools, local areas and wider partners to support timely and effective implementation, backed by significant financial investment and clear, evidence-based guidance and tools.

At the same time, we have a once in a generation opportunity to improve the SEND system as an integral part of a stronger education and public service landscape. I would greatly appreciate the Committee's constructive support and continued commitment throughout the consultation period and as we move into delivery of a system that better serves all our children and young people.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bridget Phillipson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education