



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

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Lord Bradley

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Dear Lord Bradley,

Schools White Paper and SEND Consultation: our vision for reform

I am writing to inform you that today the government has published two significant documents: our schools white paper: *Every Child Achieving and Thriving* white paper and the accompanying SEND Consultation: *Putting Children and Young People First*. Together, these outline our ambitions for an inclusive, high standards education system that enables every child and young person to learn, achieve and thrive.

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 standard, 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.

These publications follow 18 months of extensive engagement with children, parents, professionals, experts, representative bodies and Parliamentarians across the country. Since launching the SEND National Conversation in December, more than 8,000 people have shared their lived experience and ideas for reform. Their reflections on the challenges faced in the current system, and their aspirations for what must change, have been central in shaping the proposals we are now bringing forward.

Children, parents, and practitioners were clear: the SEND system must work better for those it serves. They emphasised the need for early support, integrated services, clear accountability, and a system that recognises strengths rather than labels. I am deeply grateful for the openness and expertise they have contributed.

The SEND reforms we are proposing respond directly to long-standing concerns about the outcomes for children with SEND and the inconsistency in support and inefficiencies created by a reactive and adversarial system. Our aim is to provide earlier support and intervention enabling many more children to achieve and thrive in their local mainstream school with appropriate support, and without needing to go through statutory assessment processes.

Our proposals set out a system that supports children and young people earlier and more consistently in education, including through clearer national expectations for inclusive practice, strengthened by National Inclusion Standards and an updated SEND Code of Practice to clarify expectations and strengthen universal evidence-based support in every mainstream nursery, school and college as well as digital Individual Support Plans developed with families. We are also improving access to education and health professionals in mainstream settings through the 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 local partners. For children with the most complex needs, we will end the postcode lottery in support by introducing evidence-based national Specialist Provision Packages, which will underpin EHCPs and provide greater consistency and quality of provision. These will be established in legislation and designed by an independent panel of education, health and care experts. Taken together, these proposals are intended to deliver tangible improvements for autistic children and young people and their families, and to complement the wider work underway to improve outcomes for autistic pupils.

These 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 achieve and thrive in local mainstream schools.

I would particularly like to thank you for your Committee's report, *Think Work First: The transition from education to work for young disabled people*, which set out the systemic barriers young disabled people face when transitioning through education and onto employment. We agree there needs to be a cultural shift to how we support young disabled people and that success is dependent upon coordinated support from school through to sustained employment. Taken together, these reforms will set the foundations for this support and, alongside the commitments set out in the Department's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, improve outcomes for young disabled people.

We are now beginning the formal consultation phase for the SEND reforms. The proposals set out a coherent, ambitious plan for a system that delivers consistently for children and young people, and to realise this, we must continue hearing directly from those with lived and professional experience. The consultation launches today and will remain open for 12 weeks.

This is a pivotal moment to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. I would welcome your constructive engagement 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