



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

17 April 2026

Dear Bridget,

We are writing to you regarding the recently published Schools White Paper, Every Child Achieving and Thriving, and the accompanying consultation on SEND reform.

Families, schools, and local authorities have waited patiently for proposals that promise much-needed reforms to SEND provision. We can all agree that the current system is not working and that children are not receiving the support they deserve while councils are driven to the brink of bankruptcy. However, it is equally clear that reform can only succeed if families are at the heart of it, and if the Government genuinely listens to those who have personally experienced the difficulties of navigating the current system and who will be most affected by any changes.

Unfortunately, recent reports that Labour MPs have received pre-written suggestions on what they should report back to you following meetings with their constituents cast doubt on how open to change the proposed reforms are and whether the Government is truly willing to listen to parents and act upon their unfiltered feedback.

We are therefore writing to express our serious concerns about the authenticity and integrity of the Government's consultation. These doubts are particularly acute regarding the proposed changes to the SEND tribunal system. Based on the information available, the tribunal will lose the power to direct a local authority to name a specific setting, and therefore significantly limit parents' rights to ensure their children receive the care they need. This would weaken instead of strengthen SEND provision.

The Government Legal Department recently stated in response to a proposed legal challenge that "the education secretary's position is that there is no duty to consult on these particular parts of the reforms (relating to the changes to tribunal powers and the shift of duty to deliver EHCPs away from local authorities to schools), in part because the decisions have already been made. Views on these issues are therefore deliberately not being sought as part of the consultation".

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It is highly concerning that the consultation excludes the very elements of the Government's proposals that have drawn the most criticism. How does the Government expect to listen to parents if it refuses to consult them on these changes? While the Government may argue there is no strict legal duty to consult on these issues, there is a clear moral and political duty to do so, to ensure children receive the care they need. The Government cannot ask parents to participate in a consultation in good faith if the most significant decisions regarding their legal rights have already been made behind closed doors.

We recognise that parents have been forced to fight tooth and nail just to secure basic support for their children. They deserve a consultation that is transparent and open to changing course based on their feedback. We are therefore calling on the Government to:

- Ensure the consultation process is entirely free from political interference and pre-determined narratives.
- Broaden the consultation to accurately reflect families' concerns, ensuring that parents can feed back on all parts of the reforms.
- Guarantee that concerns from parents will be listened to and acted upon.

Yours sincerely

MUNIRA WILSON MP

Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Education, Children and Families

CAROLINE VOADEN MP

Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Schools

STEFF AQUARONE MP

ALISON BENNETT MP

JOSH BABRINDE MP

ALEX BREWER MP

JESS BROWN-FULLER MP

CHARLOTTE CANE MP

DANNY CHAMBERS MP

CHRIS COGHLAN MP

VICTORIA COLLINS MP

ADAM DANCE MP

STEVE DARLING MP

BOBBY DEAN MP

LEE DILLON MP

WILL FORSTER MP

ZOE FRANKLIN MP

RACHEL GILMOUR MP

OLLY GLOVER MP

MARIE GOLDMAN MP

TOM GORDON MP

SARAH GREEN MP

MONICA HARDING MP

PIPPA HEYLINGS MP

WERA HOBHOUSE MP

LIZ JARVIS MP

CLIVE JONES MP

PAUL KOHLER MP

JAMES MACCLEARY MP

BEN MAGUIRE MP

HELEN MAGUIRE MP

MIKE MARTIN MP

BRIAN MATHEW MP

CHARLIE MAYNARD MP

CALUM MILLER MP

LAYLA MORAN MP

HELEN MORGAN MP

EDWARD MORELLO MP

MANUELA PERTEGHELLA MP

AL PINKERTON MP

JOSHUA REYNOLDS MP

IAN ROOME MP

ANNA SABINE MP

ROZ SAVAGE MP

VIKKI SLADE MP

IAN SOLLUM MP

CAMERON THOMAS MP

MARTIN WRIGLEY MP

CLAIRE YOUNG MP