



Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State

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Brian Lamb
Chair of Special Educational Consortium
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16th

December 2008

Dear Brian,

Thank you very much for your letter of December 9th and for the important issues that you raise. I agree with you that, as a matter of principle, we need to act now to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and to increase parental confidence.

You raise a number of issues about compliance some of which relate to information requirements. On the basis of some early findings from the National Strategies SEN Adviser team, I have asked them to take a more detailed look at compliance with all the SEN and disability requirements and to report back to me. We cannot make important judgements about how the framework itself is operating if we do not have compliance with it.

I agree that we should carry out a comprehensive examination of the information requirements on schools and local authorities in relation to SEN and disability. I would like you to carry this out and to do it with a view to achieving a number of objectives. The information requirements need to meet the needs of parents, provide greater transparency in the system and focus on outcomes for children with SEN and disabled children. Please include advice on how to improve compliance with these duties and report to me in April 2009 so that your work can inform the implementation of SEN (Information) Act 2008. You will want to take account of our proposals on 21st century schools and report cards, which we published on [9 December].

I agree that there needs to be a much sharper focus on improving outcomes for children with SEN and I want to ensure that schools have high aspirations for all children. Therefore I am proposing a pilot that will be firmly located within our development of personalisation, will draw on the experience of the Making Good Progress pilot and take account of the wider Every Child Matters outcomes. I want the pilot to demonstrate how parents and children themselves can be actively involved in agreeing stretching targets. I am asking my officials to ensure that you are involved in the design of the pilot. The pilot will be an important part of the development of our vision for the 21st Century School.



department for
children, schools and families

I want to respond to your points about SEN and disability and their profile in all areas of policy. I am asking my officials to work with the National College for School Leadership to embed high aspirations for children with SEN in the school leadership training. You raised the issue in relation school leadership but I want to go further.

We will also:

- ask the Assessment Expert Group to consider the particular needs of children with SEN and disabled children as part of their review;
- take forward with Becta online reporting to parents of information on SEN; and
- further support schools in assessing what constitutes good progress for children with SEN.

Given the importance of your Inquiry to improving parental confidence, which is a priority for my Department, I want to reflect these proposals in the Children's Plan One Year on document, to be published on Thursday. In your final report, I would like you to consider how well this package of measures will address parents' and others' concerns and improve outcomes for children with SEN.

I want to thank you for your work and for your commitment to link with Sir Jim Rose in relation to his work on dyslexia.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'ED BALLS', written in a cursive style.

ED BALLS MP