

Education system has reached a “new low” says Green co-leader



Green Party

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***Green Co-Leader writes to Education Secretary after revelations that children with additional needs are being sent home from school**

The Green Party's Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley has today written to the Education Secretary Justine Greening over what he describes as a “new low” in the education system.

Bartley appeared on a BBC Breakfast report this morning into SEND children [1]. During the course of the programme a headteacher admitted that his school has often had to ask parents to remove their disabled children, and others with additional needs from his school because they do not have the staff resources to properly support them.

Mr Bartley's letter to Ms Greening asks her to disclose how many schools are facing similar problems and what she intends to do to address it.

Speaking after his appearance on BBC Breakfast, Mr Bartley said:

“This is a new low for the education system which is becoming a hostile environment for disabled children and those with additional needs. It is unacceptable and clearly discriminatory for children to be sent home from school because of a lack of resources.

“As the father of a child with special needs I am no stranger to the challenges and barriers children face in accessing school. But the disclosure from the headteacher I heard from this morning was on another level. It's not just a case that the support in schools for children with additional needs is poor: in some cases it is totally non-existent. Children are now being denied access to education.

“Education is a right for everyone not an optional extra. This is something that urgently needs addressing and that is why I have written to the Secretary of State.”

Notes

[1] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09gsfkp>

[2] Full text of letter:

Dear Justine,

Today at a BBC Breakfast event in Manchester the headteacher of a local school told me how, as a result of year-on-year cuts to the education budget, his school often has to ask parents of SEND children to take them home because they do not have the staff in place to support them.

As the father of a son with spina bifida I was heartbroken to hear that story. I can only imagine how demoralising it must be for the parents of the SEND pupils at that headteacher's school to know that their children are routinely missing out on an education. I am in no doubt that the headteacher is doing all he can to support those pupils but of course he can only manage with the resources he has at his disposal.

I'd like to know:

- a) Do you know the extent to which SEND children are missing out on school days because mainstream schools do not have the resources to support them?
- b) Given that this seems to be a not irregular problem, what the government is going to do to address it?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Jonathan Bartley

Co-Leader of the Green Party

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