

Press release: New action to improve outcomes for children with additional needs

Steps to transform education for children with additional needs and ambitious plans to improve the experiences of children in alternative provision have been announced today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Evidence shows children educated in alternative provision, school settings for children who face challenges in mainstream school, are less likely to achieve good GCSE grades and are less likely to be in education, employment or training post-16. Previous analysis also shows that children excluded from school are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

The plans announced today (16 March) aim to tackle those inequalities and ensure Britain is a country that truly works for everyone by looking at the experience and outcomes for children who face the most challenges in mainstream school – including those at greatest risk of exclusion – such as those with special educational needs (SEN), children with autism or children in need of help and protection, including those in care.

They include an externally led review of school exclusions, originally announced by the Prime Minister in response to the [Race Disparity Audit](#), which will look at why some children are more likely to be excluded than others. Plans also include a new £4million fund to develop new ways to help children with additional needs move from alternative provision in to mainstream education or special schools and measures to drive up standards in alternative provision education settings.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It's a mark of a strong society how we treat children who are most in need of our support. Every child, whatever their background and no matter what challenges they face, should have access to a world-class education that prepares them for life in the modern world.

Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, standards are rising and we are already encouraging schools to focus on the achievements of all pupils, not just the highest achievers.

Children only get one chance at their education and they deserve the best. But for too many children – and often those who are most vulnerable – there are inconsistencies when it comes to their experiences of school and too many parents are left worried and concerned.

That's not good enough which is why we are going to improve our understanding of these important issues and tackle them head on.

The proposals outlined today include:

- The launch of an externally led review of exclusions, led by former Children's Minister Edward Timpson to look at how the use and levels of exclusions vary from school to school focusing on those children who are more likely to be excluded.
- A 'roadmap' setting out how the government will transform alternative provision to make sure these education settings provide high-quality teaching and an education that meets the individual needs of young people in their care.
- A £4 million Alternative Provision Innovation Fund to test and develop projects that support children back into mainstream or special schools, as well as encouraging parental and carer involvement in the education of their child. The investment will also fund schemes that support young people as they move from alternative provision in to training or further education at post-16, so all young people can succeed in the next stage of their lives.
- A call for evidence on how to improve educational outcomes for Children in Need – children that need additional help or protection, including children in care. The call for evidence will gather best practice from school leaders, social workers and other professionals, fulfilling a manifesto commitment to find out what works in improving the educational outcomes for these children.

New analysis published today reveals how far Children in Need fall behind their peers from the early years, making less progress throughout school. Children in Need are three times more likely to have special educational needs than other children, and this compounds poor educational outcomes.

Today's plans will sharpen the focus on the core essentials of education and improve educational outcomes for these children, widening the options available to them so that they can succeed later in life.

Leader of the external review into exclusions and former Children's Minister, Edward Timpson said:

I'm delighted to have been asked by the Secretary of State to lead this important piece of work. As someone who grew up in a family who fostered, I'm all too familiar with the disproportionately higher levels of exclusion of some children, including those in care.

This review provides a real opportunity to fully understand what drives the different rates of exclusion in our schools system and the impact it has on the outcomes of children involved.

I intend to draw from the best possible expertise, knowledge and evidence of what works in the field to ensure the review can help address the clear disparities and variability that still exists in the practice, impact and experience around exclusions, starting with an open 'Call for Evidence' I am launching today.

Building on the Race Disparity Audit, the review of exclusions will look to tackle some of the inconsistencies highlighted including exploring why Black Caribbean boys are more than three times as likely to be excluded from school.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation:

Outcomes for these pupils across education, health and employment are poor. The government's new plans provide a welcome opportunity to refocus our efforts and transform life chances for this important group of learners.

It is good to see a focus on evidence for improving outcomes too. Making the best of what we already know about 'what works' and sharing that knowledge across the system is key to getting it right.

Dame Christine Lenehan, Director for the Council for Disabled Children said:

We welcome these important announcements on behalf of children with special educational needs and their families for too long the education system has disproportionately excluded these children and failed to celebrate their achievements. This affects, not just their childhood but their whole lives.

We will want to work alongside the review and ensure that it makes a real difference.