



Department
for Education

Terms of Reference: Expert Advisory Group for Inclusion

Membership

Tom Rees, CEO, Ormiston Academy Trust (Chair)
Susan Douglas, CEO, Eden Academy Trust
Annamarie Hassall, CEO National Association for Special Educational Needs
Dr Anne Heavey, Director of Insights for Ambition Institute
Andrew O'Neill, Headteacher at All Saints Catholic College
Claire Jackson, Principal Educational Psychologist at Salford City Council
Heather Sandy, Executive Director of Children's Services at Lincolnshire County Council

Purpose

To advise ministers on how to improve mainstream education outcomes and experiences for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a particular focus on the following areas:

Inclusive classroom practice and culture – what curricular and pedagogical approaches should be embedded in high-quality teaching; and what effective whole school approaches are part of inclusive mainstream cultures?

Partnerships with families – how settings can work most effectively with parents and families towards more successful mainstream inclusion?

Improving identification of children with SEND in mainstream - what approaches need to be in place to support earlier and more accurate identification of needs; how can the description of SEND be improved to support assessment of need;

Additional support for children with SEND in mainstream - how can more targeted and specialist provision broaden and enrich the mainstream offer to meet a wider range of needs?

Workforce capability and expertise – what expertise should exist within mainstream settings and how can we build capacity within the workforce?

Enabling conditions and incentives - what changes are needed to the wider system to support inclusive education, including approaches to funding, workforce planning and accountability; and what incentives act as barriers to inclusion in mainstream settings and how can these be removed or reduced?

To provide advice to inform ambitions to set clearer expectations around roles and responsibilities around inclusion and SEND in the education system.

The group will use their collective expertise to advise on the implementation of reform to ensure children and young people are effectively supported to achieve and thrive.

The group will report to the Secretary of State, via the Minister for School Standards, and although it will work with the Department, they will be officially independent from the Department, with any communications making it clear that they are not party-political appointments and that their role is to provide advice in their professional expert capacity.

The group will consider how reforms focused on improving inclusion will interact with wider system reforms including, but not limited to, the Curriculum and Assessment Review and reforms to Ofsted and accountability.

Scope

The group will focus its work and advice primarily on policy and practice in mainstream settings from KS1 – KS5.

The group will consider the interactions between special and mainstream support but will not consider policy and practice delivered within specialist settings, including alternative provision.

How the group will work

The group will engage with Dame Christine Lenehan, as government's Strategic Advisor on SEND, and will interact with other relevant departmental expert groups including the Neurodivergence Task and Finish group and the Expert Advisory Group for Early Years SEND. The group will also interact with, and consider, any developments in health and social care.

In developing advice, the EAG will draw on a wide range of inputs, including consultation with education professionals in both the mainstream and specialist sectors, alongside other experts, parents, children and young people, and stakeholders such as employers, colleges, trade unions, and charities.

Timings

The inclusion expert advisor roles will commence from November 2024 and last for up to 8 months. The duration may be subject to change following ministerial decisions.