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In The News: (Education Select Committee SEND Inquiry report October 2019)

In 2018, a House of Commons Education Select Committee, made up of 11 cross-party MPs, launched a formal inquiry into SEND. Their initial report was published at the end of October 2019.

Some of the things they set out to examine were:

- how well the system implemented the 2014 SEND reforms;
- whether funding is adequate and properly distributed;
- how well children and young people with SEND were being assessed and supported

The findings and subsequent recommendations make very interesting reading for SENCOs and Headteachers and are likely to have some far-reaching implications.

Overall, the inquiry confirms that the 2014 Reforms and their implementation in the SEN Code of Practice (2015) should bring about a positive improvement. They state, **'We are confident that the 2014 reforms were the right ones. We believe that if the challenges within the system—including finance—are addressed, local authorities will be able to discharge their duties sufficiently.'** However they then go on to state that : *"Let down by failures of implementation, the 2014 reforms have resulted in confusion and at times unlawful practice, bureaucratic nightmares, buck-passing and a lack of accountability, strained resources and adversarial experiences, and ultimately dashed the hopes of many."*

Of course, **SEND funding** continues to loom large in all schools' concerns but the **report is absolutely clear that by itself, more funding won't solve anything.** Unless **organisational behaviour changes** across the whole system, in schools, local authorities, health, and in central government - then *"any additional money will be wasted and make little difference"* to the lives of children and young people with SEND.

At a school level, we need to ensure that we find creative ways to use our SEND budget so that it gives us value for money and has the greatest possible effect on ALL our pupils with SEND.

Pupils at SEN Support level of need were highlighted as being of particular concern in the report. They suggest that, ‘the intense focus on Education Health and Care Plans and the transition date has led to children on SEN Support being neglected. Children are unable to access appropriate support at this level, which has led to a lack of early intervention, and an increase in parents applying for Education Health and Care Plans because they appear to be the only way to open doors for access to support that has become rationed and difficult to access. They go on to recommend that the ‘Government pay particular attention to ensuring that the funding system works for children and young people with SEND who do not need EHCPs’

They further state that, **‘We heard a lot about local authorities’ poor performance. But for children who receive SEN Support, they rely primarily on their school to get their support needs right. If, for whatever reason, a school fails to provide high quality SEN Support, the child is failed. We are pleased that Ofsted’s new framework includes a focus on children with SEND.**

On the matter of **the EIF (2019)** the report states that *‘the Minister for Schools, Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP told us: The new Ofsted framework has a greater emphasis on the progress that children with special educational needs are making. We have also had a greater emphasis on the progress pupils make in school, so that a school will be rewarded and credited for the progress children with special educational needs make.’*

The report also looked at the **role of the SENCO** and expresses concern at the pressures that school SENCOs face in meeting their duties, as bureaucracy increasingly takes SENCOs away from the classroom. They found that SENCOs can be part-time or diverted from their SEND responsibilities by other duties, taking them away from supporting teachers and pupils. *‘SENCOs play increasingly important roles in schools. As the number of children with SEND increases, and as pressure on teachers also rise, they need expert advice from other professionals. We consider that the role of the SENCO is of such importance that those undertaking that role should have enough dedicated time, pay and knowledge to enable them to do their job well. However, not all schools will be large enough to require a full-time dedicated SENCO. In addition, while we acknowledge that currently SENCOs should undertake the NASENCO training within three years of taking on the role, we think that this should be done sooner.’*

The report recommended that *‘the DfE should, within six months of the publication of this report, issue updated guidance setting out that all SENCOs should undertake the NASENCO course upon taking on a SENCO role.’*

And finally, the report concluded:

“... the weight of the evidence, gathered through our inquiry and by others in their own work, reviews and experiences, is clear. The system is not working—yet.

“The Government must act decisively and soon. It must implement our recommendations with immediate effect and move swiftly to address the many other problems that we identify in our report. A generation of children depends on it.”

Watch this space!

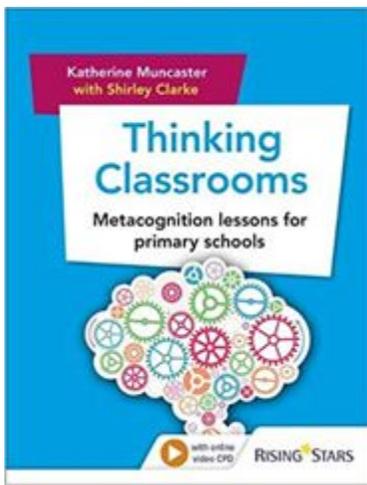
By Sue Plechowicz

Report- <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201920/cmselect/cmeduc/20/20.pdf>

Related Training:

Effective Use of Funding to meet SEND Statutory Requirements – Truro 17th January; Bodmin 23rd January; Okehampton 31st Jan

Meeting Statutory Requirements and Preparing for OfSTED – Truro 13th February; Okehampton 12th March.



Cost effective at £30.99 from Rising Stars

Resource Review:

'Boost children's independence, resilience, approach to learning and attainment with an easy-to-use handbook from growth mindset expert Katherine Muncaster and formative assessment expert Shirley Clarke.'

According to research carried out by the Education Endowment Fund, teaching children metacognitive skills (an understanding of how they learn) can help raise attainment by an average of seven months (for further details on Metacognition see our Inside Look, May 2019). This comprehensive handbook, shortlisted for the TEACH Primary Awards, is suitable for Reception to Y6, but can be adapted to suit secondary classrooms. It includes a clear introduction to metacognition and its benefits, engaging lesson plans, pupil self-evaluation at the end of each activity, downloadable worksheets and templates, original and fun assembly ideas with accompanying videos and enables development of teacher confidence through embedded CPD.

Recent Research:

Social and Emotional Learning

In October, the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) published a Guidance Report entitled 'Improving Social and Emotional Learning in Primary Schools,' following an in-depth review of the best available international research and consultation with teachers and other experts.

The research concludes that the way SEL is adopted and embedded within the school 'really matters' for children's outcomes and **we** would add ...' None more so for those with SEND.'

In the forward to the guidance, Sir Kevan Collins, says, *'with the right support, children learn to articulate and manage their emotions, deal with conflict, solve problems, understand things from another person's perspective, and communicate in appropriate ways. These 'social and emotional skills' are essential for children's development, support effective learning, and are linked to positive outcomes in later life.'*

The guidance offers six practical and evidence-based recommendations to support children's social and emotional development. These are:

1. Teach SEL skills explicitly
2. Integrate and model SEL skills through everyday teaching
3. Plan carefully for adopting a SEL programme
4. Use a SAFE curriculum: Sequential, Active, Focused and Explicit
5. Reinforce SEL skills through whole-school ethos and activities
6. Plan, support, and monitor SEL implementation

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/SEL/EEF_Social_and_Emotional_Learning.pdf