



Department of
Education

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Your Ref: 482/09/1/05

13 October 2009

Dear John

REVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND INCLUSION

Thank you for your recently received letter (dated 8 September 2009) regarding the Department of Education's consultation on the Review of SEN and Inclusion.

I understand that Mervyn Storey has now written to the Minister on the matter of an extension to the consultation period and he will receive a response in due course.

The Department has been keen to engage as widely as possible on the proposals emanating from the Review and has held eleven public meetings over a geographical spread, which have attracted sizeable audiences. In addition, consultations are ongoing with children and young people.

The current policy and statutory framework for Special Educational Needs is, as the Committee will know, complex and with many inter-related layers. The new policy proposals are necessarily at a high, conceptual level so that the Department can begin to work through a new policy framework from a top down perspective. The Department is therefore seeking to gauge whether there is general agreement to the overarching high level framework proposed by the Review and with the overall direction of flow that the needs of the majority of children should be able to be met within school. Feedback on this will then enable the detailed outworking of the Review to be addressed at the next stage in the policy development process.

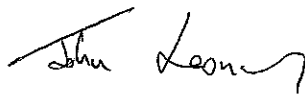


INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The public meetings provided an opportunity for the audience to hear key messages and to put forward comments to those who have been closely involved in the formulation of the proposals. Some of the questions put to officials at the meetings were, however, of a detailed nature that cannot be answered at this stage before agreement to the high level proposals has been achieved. Other questions asked by parents and others were outside the scope of the Review. In addition, some parents asked questions about the nature of special educational provision for their own children. As it is the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that have responsibility for making SEN provision, officials offered to discuss individual issues at the end of the meetings and some parents took up this opportunity. Where this happened, the officials present agreed to take the issues back to relevant officials in either the Department or in the ELBs.

All of the presentations were given by Dr Marleen Collins who headed up the Review team until September this year. Dr Collins was supported by Mrs Irene Murphy, who joined the Review team in September, and was formerly head of the Department's Special Education Policy Advisory Group. Other officials in attendance fulfilled support roles.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Leonard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JOHN LEONARD
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer