

Response to “Report on children with SEND who are not currently accessing education in Oxfordshire 2022”

Dear Parent Carers

Thank you for sharing your experiences with OxPCF who have now had an opportunity to bring these to strategic leads at the Local Authority and partners.

Our ambition is for your children to have rich and fulfilling lives at the heart of their community. This means improving the outcomes and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND by providing the right support and opportunities at the right time. Given the current national and local context across education, health and social care, including the lasting effects of the pandemic, this is a challenging agenda but one that we must collectively embrace together if we are to see the improvements that we all want.

We are sorry that for some of our children in Oxfordshire this is not the reality that they are currently facing. Alongside our schools, we strive to make suitable arrangements for every child with SEN, in particular those with an EHC Plan. Every individual child is important. There are currently approximately 20,000 children in Oxfordshire identified as having SEN; just over 5,500 of those have an EHC Plan.

The “Report on children with SEND who are not currently accessing education in Oxfordshire 2022” recognises that many of the issues highlighted in the OxPCF report overlap with the concerns raised at the public protest in November 2022 and the seven associated petitions and that the report is based on a survey with 28 responses and 15 case studies. 88% of these responses stated that ASD was the SEN for their child which is a considerably higher proportion than for the SEN population in Oxfordshire as a whole.

We look forward to working collaboratively to make the necessary changes to deliver our shared ambition for children and young people in Oxfordshire with SEND.

Kind regards

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Appendix

Please see below for our response to the specific recommendations in the OxPCF report, updated March 2023:

Recommendation in Report	Response	March 2023
Commit to improving communication with families, to ensure that they receive transparent and accurate information at all stages of the process including regular updates and responses to telephone calls/emails	Oxfordshire County Council recognises that communication with schools and partners too frequently isn't sufficiently timely. While acknowledging that this is partly due to unprecedented demand for the SEN Casework Team, we are working with staff to address this including clarity on response times and effective management of expectation.	Increased funding to the service means that we are increasing the number of officers across the SEND Casework team. We are also putting in place an assessment team, and recruitment is underway.
Commit to actively listening to and engaging with families, taking into account their views and wishes and using them to construct positive outcomes wherever possible	Oxfordshire County Council are committed to working in co-production with children and their families. This will involve a shared understanding of what co-production is and clearly includes listening to and taking into account their views while also ensuring that we meet our statutory obligations.	OCC senior leadership attending an OXFSN and OXPCF event 'Better Together' at the Kassam on Monday 20 th March. The SEND Service have a newly appointed Lead Advocate for Children and Young People
Commit to adherence to statutory timeframes for EHC needs applications, assessments, plans and subsequent annual reviews and plans amendments	Like all Local Authorities, during the past three years Oxfordshire has experienced a significant increase in requests for EHCNAs (and, consequently, the number of EHC Plans maintained). This has placed considerable pressure on the SEN Casework Team and advice providers to recruit and train sufficient staff. We have recently reconfigured the SEN Casework Team structure and introduced an even more comprehensive continuing professional development programme for new and existing staff; part of this includes good practice and the importance of adhering to statutory deadlines.	We are under monitoring arrangements by the DfE and they are happy with the plan and the progress to date. We have increased our timeliness as per the scrutiny paper dated 30 th March 2023.
Review current local policy and procedure to ensure compliance with SEND law, followed by an annual audit and other measures such as regular quality-monitoring	Oxfordshire County Council policy and procedure is rooted in compliance with the SEND legislation, regulations and statutory guidance. Training for staff on SEND Law is part of the induction for new staff and refresher training is part of the annual training cycle.	Ensure induction and staff training is in place for all staff, and updated when required

spot checks to ensure continued compliance by all staff		
Review SEND training provided to schools to ensure its adequacy and make improvements where necessary. All teaching staff and teaching assistants should receive comprehensive SEND training with additional more specialised sessions which are targeted, based on the needs of the child or children in the classroom	<p>Schools are best placed to identify staff training needs and are responsible for the continuing professional development of their staff.</p> <p>That said, for training opportunities that are offered by the Council, feedback is collected after each and used to inform the development and refinement of future sessions.</p>	Continue to review and update training programme available to schools on a regular basis.
Commit to a longer-term project to promote a culture change in schools to include a shift towards positive early intervention and more inclusive environments.	<p>As set out in the Local Area SEND Strategy, Oxfordshire as a Local Area is committed to offering a continuum of in-county provision covering education, health and social care to meet the requirements of children and young people with SEND.</p> <p>For education, an Ordinarily Available Toolkit has been developed with and for schools to clarify the expectations of what special educational provision can reasonably be expected within a mainstream setting. The toolkit will be published and launched in January 2023 with training provided for schools. SENDIASS will be producing a version for parents.</p>	<p>Ordinarily Available Toolkit launched in February 2023</p> <p>Early Intervention work includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SENDCO Helpdesk -SWERL -TA Recruitment and Retention -Enhanced Pathways <p>Funding secured for a countywide Early Intervention offer. A parent carer is a member of the strategy group that is currently meeting monthly.</p>
Commit to providing comprehensive training to Senior Leadership Teams and SENDCos in schools to ensure their full understanding of the statutory obligations placed on them, and the local authority, to children with SEND	<p>SENCOs are required nationally to complete a comprehensive qualification at Masters level to equip them with the skills and knowledge to take a strategic lead on SEND within their school.</p> <p>Regular briefings are provided for Headteachers and SENCOs but it is for schools make themselves aware of the statutory SEN obligations placed on them by the national legislation, regulations and statutory guidance.</p>	Continue to offer the programme of briefings and information sharing sessions for school leaders.

	In addition, there are two conferences arranged for Education professionals in March 2023, the Annual Inclusion Conference 2023 'Thinking differently about behaviour' and 2023 Oxfordshire SEND Live.	
Review the support offered to children and families where they are in the position that the child is not receiving or participating in education for whatever reason. At present, there does not appear to be any readily available	The view of Oxfordshire County Council is that children are best educated with their peers in school. Children too unwell to attend school should have a timely referral from the appropriate health professional to the Hospital School so that they can receive education while they recover. There will be a small number of children for whom this approach is not suitable and their needs will be considered on the individual circumstances. Where this happens, arrangements need to be kept under regular review with consideration given to what support would be needed so that they can return to being educated alongside their peers.	OCC will continue to review children's needs on a case by case basis.
Review the education provision provided by the local authority when a child is unable to attend their school. At present, some children are entirely without any education for extended periods if they are not able to attend. This is unacceptable, unlawful, and catastrophic for the children		
Improve access to specialist provision. If a child must remain in an 'unsuitable' mainstream setting whilst they wait for a place to become available for them, then a commitment must be made to ensure that 'above and beyond' measures are taken to meet their needs in the interim. Additional support by way of further funding, training, outsourcing and assistance in the recruitment of specialist staff if	In early 2022, we ran a public consultation that included seeking views on the sufficiency of state-funded Special Schools in Oxfordshire. There was overwhelming support for additional special school places. The SEN Sufficiency Strategy is under review and will be published in early 2023. As well as looking to expand existing special schools, new schools are scheduled to open at Bloxham Grove in 2024 and Faringdon in 2025. In addition, we have also submitted to the Department of Education bids for two new special free schools.	With the recent news that the two additional wave funded specialist schools bids have been unsuccessful, the team are working on other viable options to be able to continue to increase the availability of special school places across Oxfordshire. Enhanced Pathways are in place in a number of schools across the county where special school places were not available which offer additional funding and expertise to the children.

<p>needed should also be provided to the setting</p>		
<p>Accept that for some children, alternative provision or EOTAS is the best outcome for them and where this is the case act swiftly to ensure they are being educated in the way that works for them, as soon as they can be</p>	<p>Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) is covered by s61 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and applies if the Local Authority determines that is “inappropriate” for a child to attend school. The presumption, therefore, is that a child should attend a school setting, unless it is inappropriate for them to do so and this will only be for a very small number of children.</p> <p>As the law indicates, EOTAS will only apply for a very small number of children. As such, ease case will need to be considered on the individual circumstances.</p> <p>We are aware that EOTAS is an issue nationally and we will be issuing a position statement soon.</p>	<p>Clarify our position on EOTAS and issue a position statement for Autumn Term 2023.</p>