

PRESS RELEASE

from the CENTRE FOR STUDIES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2006, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GOVERNMENT URGED TO STEP UP INCLUSION

The Government has been urged to step up its commitment to inclusive education by setting a date for the phasing out of separate 'special' schools for disabled pupils.

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) said the Government should stick by its inclusion policy - despite criticism from the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee following its inquiry into special educational needs provision. According to the Centre, the Government was right to envisage in its 2004 SEN Strategy a reduction in numbers of pupils attending separate 'special' schools. It should now renew and step up its commitment to inclusion by providing more resources for mainstream schools to increase their capacity to provide appropriate support and accommodations for all pupils without exception and set targets for this to happen. The Centre said a deadline of 2020 should provide sufficient time for mainstream schools to make the necessary changes and for separate 'special' schools to be phased out.

In its recently published report on the SEN inquiry the Select Committee said the Government was giving a 'confusing message' about closure of 'special' schools and should be 'up-front' about its apparent change in policy direction. The Committee urged the Government to place a statutory requirement on local authorities to provide a broad range of 'high quality, well resourced, flexible' provision for disabled pupils, including the provision of 'special' schools.

Commenting on the Committee's report, a spokesperson for CSIE said: 'We welcome the emphasis in the report on the need for a radical improvement in provision for disabled pupils, particularly through increasing investment in staff training for inclusion and setting minimum standards of provision. However, we can not agree that separate 'special' schools should be retained. We have argued consistently that segregating disabled pupils for their education is damaging to society and individuals and a violation of their human rights. We think the Select Committee should be upholding disabled pupils' rights by urging the Government to set a timetable for developing mainstream schools' capacity to welcome all children and young people and phasing out separate 'special schools', rather than arguing for their retention'.

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