

SNC Speech, Renata Blower

I would like to congratulate the government.

Who would have thought it was possible to take a great idea like the SEND reforms

- throw a huge amount of money at the bureaucracy of bringing it about and at the same time
- think that it makes perfect sense to ensure its failure by stripping Local Authorities of any means by which to make it happen.

The government has successfully managed to create an environment that punishes the **very** schools we should be applauding.

The schools that want the very best for ALL pupils.

By continually underfunding education headteachers are faced with an impossible choice- Do they welcome children with SEND, knowing that they will struggle to fund the resources to meet their needs and need to make cuts in other vital areas of other children's education

Or

Do they turn them away?

Again, I'd like to congratulate the government, for taking the idea of child centric, inclusive education and instead creating a situation where our children are instead seen as burdens that schools bat between themselves trying to avoid being burdened with.

Yes, I used the word burdened. Because that is what happens when you have a government who are dangerously short sighted.

That is what happens when you have a government that marks success in terms of short term budgets rather than in long term aspirations.

When the government decided that schools and disabled children were not worth investing in they gave us a society where disabled children to go for years without access to any suitable education.

They gave us a society where schools have to choose whether to be inclusive or buy classroom equipment.

They have reduced parents to having to beg, plead and fight to try to get their child an education, and even then the parents don't always succeed.

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And it's NOT because the parents haven't poured their heart, soul, savings and sanity into the fight, but simply because there isn't anywhere for their child to go.

They showed us that they believe that only children who learn in the way that fits with THEIR idea of educational achievement matter.

They have failed to listen to children

They have failed to listen to parents

They have failed to listen to teachers and head teachers and governors

But we know better.

We know that education is a RIGHT not a privilege.

And that is why we are here.

We are here because we know that you change the world by bringing people together.

Look around you. THIS is what together looks like. THIS is where change happens.

We are here because we don't believe that bullies should win. We **don't** think it's ok to pick on little kids. Because when an adult treats a child like they don't matter, that child starts to believe it. **That child grows up to be an adult that doesn't believe in themselves.**

The government is too short sighted to realise that one day THEY will be the vulnerable ones.

When they are old, possibly disabled themselves, and with a voice that a new generation doesn't care about. THEY will be living with the consequences of seeing so little value in taking care of our future. Of course it will be too late by then, they will have taught a generation that being different means deserving less.

But luckily for them, we have been educated by our children. They have taught us to know better.

We have learnt the rewards that having high aspirations for every child brings. A value that is **not measured in short term budgets**, but one that is measured by the way we accept, nurture and celebrate the beautiful diversity our children bring to the world.

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Our funny, stubborn, quirky, gorgeous, creative, weird, rebellious, brilliant children are why we are here.

They are why we have come together

Because they deserve better

Because they matter

Because, now more than ever, we need to cherish people in this world who see things differently.

Because these very same children will be the ones who figure out how to fix the mistakes we adults have made.

Because every child matters.

Thank you.