



**Vicky Ford MP**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

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Council for Disabled Children  
National Children's Bureau,  
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13 May 2021

Dear Philippa, Jolanta and Kate,

Thank you for your letter of 8 March, about your concerns regarding the change in terminology from exclusions to 'suspensions' and 'expulsions'. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I would like to assure you that this government is committed to improving behaviour and discipline in the classroom because we know the effect misbehaviour can have on lost learning time, pupil well-being, and harm the life chances of young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As you mention, in May 2019, the government announced it would return to referring to fixed term exclusion as 'suspension' and permanent exclusion as 'expulsion', to simplify terminology and prevent conflation.

We have been clear this was not a change in policy and through feedback many across the sector recognised the need to differentiate between temporary and permanent exclusions. However, having heard the concerns raised by the sector and key stakeholders like yourselves regarding the term 'expulsion', the department has concluded it will reinstate 'permanent exclusion' when referring to a permanent exclusion while continuing to use 'suspension' when referring to a fixed term exclusion.

As we have previously discussed, I recognise the pandemic has had a particular impact on your work and on the children and young people you represent, and I am aware that some groups of children have a greater likelihood of suspension and permanent exclusion than others. Permanent exclusions have remained stable over the last three years and remain a rare event. I recognise though that the vast majority of pupils in Alternative Provision (AP) have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), particularly social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH).

I have made it a priority to protect and support children and young people with SEND throughout the pandemic and to put them at the heart of our wider recovery work. As AP is increasingly operating as part of the SEND system, I will continue to look carefully with my AP stakeholder Group at how we can work together to

improve outcomes in AP as part of the ongoing SEND Review. I am also aware that Robert Arnott would like to discuss the SEND review at one of his joint SEND and AP stakeholder meetings in the near future.

Thank you for writing about this important matter. I hope this reply is useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vicky Ford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dash at the end.

**Vicky Ford MP**  
**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families**

CC: Dame Christine Linehan, Director, Council for Disabled Children