

10th July 2018

To Headteachers and Principals (FAO SENCO)

Dear Colleague,

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Harrow

As we approach the end of this academic year I am writing to you to thank you, your governing body and your staff for all that you have contributed to the borough wide provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Although this letter is written to headteachers and principals I would ask that you to please **pass a digital copy** of it to your SENCO for their consideration.

Looking back on the outcomes in 2017 we can see the many successes achieved for children with SEND in Harrow schools based on the school census. It does not include all of Harrow's resident children but it is a very useful set of indicators. I have **attached to this letter** a list of those key indicators for you. It is always useful to have the key indicators of your phase to hand if asked about the borough's wider performance. As you will also note we still have challenges. The Local Authority is committed to working with you to meet the needs of our children and young people.

In that vein I wish particularly to thank the school community for its work with teams in the LA to facilitate the needs of children and young people with SEND, whether that is in the way they are welcomed or the way that their needs are met. We have always been a local area and a community of schools committed to inclusion and without negating the challenges we still face the evidence suggests that that commitment is working to the benefit of our children overall.

Building on what we have achieved to date as a community there are areas that we will try to do better. One notable one is that despite the very low proportion of fixed term exclusion for children with SEND our level of permanent exclusion has risen. It would, however, like to start with some very practical steps that we can do together to raise the profile of SEND and to help parents and carers, and indeed young people themselves, to navigate their way through what support is available.

The Local Offer (LO)

[The Local Offer](#) is an essential point of reference for all parents and carers who have children and young people with a special educational need or a disability. The LO is now smart phone friendly and can be used on any device.

- SENCOs and other staff should be encouraged to use the LO regularly in meetings with parents and carers so that it becomes part of the experience of contact with schools and young people in relation to their child's needs.
- The LO should be readily visible from all school and college websites.
- Parents and carers should be regularly asked if they are aware of the LO and what it offers. This may be useful as a question in parent / carers surveys.
- It would be helpful to carry the link to the LO in school and college newsletters and to promote it at parents evenings and other events.
- Parents and carers may be advised that the LO carries a [translation tool](#) at the top of each page. This may be helpful for schools and colleges in working with families where English is not their first language.

We are conscious that the LO is in constant need of refreshing and improving and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the LA is committed to that work but needs the help and feedback of all partners.

Working in Partnership with Harrow Parents for Disabled Children (HP4DC)

[HP4DC](#) is a group funded by the DFE to support the parents and carers of children and young people in Harrow who have SEND. The HP4DC provides an important function in guiding parents and carers through the world of SEND and acting as a critical friend to the LA and other partners.

They carried out a recent survey of school websites in relation to SEND and provided helpful feedback. There were many very positive aspects noted and particularly the work that many schools have done on the publication of the [School Information Reports](#) (SIR) for SEN. This has been a significant piece of work achieved by SENCOs. In considering how to improve school websites the HP4DC had the following observations (which will not apply to every school but is worth checking).

1. Parents and carers will search for SEN or disability. In most schools this is straightforward but some schools may list this under Inclusion and SENCOs as Inclusion Managers / Leads. This can make navigation difficult.
2. The Contacts page may benefit from a contact that will go straight to the SENCO or SEN Department.
3. Consider how prominent and easy to find the **Local Offer** is on the website.
4. It is good practice to walk through the navigation of the school or college site with a group of your parents and carers and see what they think.

In another HP4DC survey of parents SEN Support featured. Parents and carers reported that it was sometimes the case that those who had a child or young person with an EHCP were well-informed and supported but some parents who had a child receiving **SEN Support** felt more isolated. Parents enquired if small support groups of parents, led by the school or parents may help parents understanding of how they can contribute to help their child.

The SENCO Forum

The SENCO Forum has been ably led by Pauline Cahillane at St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School this year. Pauline has brought in a number of leads in different agencies to support the work of SENCOs and to promote best practice. I know her work was important in the publication of SIRs (above). I would like to take this opportunity to record my thanks for all her hard work. I would encourage all SENCOs to continue to support each other through this Forum and to take advantage of the wider support offered through the SLA .

SEND Strategy and Capital Plan

The LO pages also carry information on the [SEND Strategy](#) and [SEN Capital Plan](#) with proposals for new ARMS provision and an all-age special school. Both these approaches can only be achieved in partnership. Locally and nationally the pressure on the High Needs Block is significant and meeting needs locally will play an important part in both improving our efficiency and in helping children, young people and families.

The Local Area Inspection of SEND

(It is a **Local Area** inspection – not just the Local Authority)

During the next school year it is very likely that we will have an inspection of the Local Area in relation to SEND and the effectiveness of the 2014 reforms in Harrow. I have spoken with headteachers, SENCOs and governors about this inspection and will continue to do so going forward. With our key partners in the CCG and NHS the LA is working to ensure that we are well prepared when it comes. We will need your support as well as that of partner agencies and charities. The [Handbook](#) provides details on the inspection process. The key points are that:

- Is about all children and young people with a SEN – **not just about** those with a statement or EHCP
- We must show that we have **learned the lessons** from earlier inspections (Ofsted's 'One Year On' Report: October 2017)
- Inspectors will consider how effectively the local area **identifies, meets the needs of and improves the outcomes** of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

The inspection will focus on **the contribution of education**, social care and health services to children and young people with SEND.

- To what extent the outcomes for children and young people are improving **as a result of** the collective actions and support of local agencies and bodies
- The efficiency of identification of SEND
- How well the local area engages with children and young people, and their parents and carers, to inform decisions about the strategic commissioning of services

- How well the local area involves the individual child or young person and their parents and carers, in the process of assessing their needs
- How well the local area communicates with children and young people, and their parents or carers, to ensure they are clear about the identification and assessment processes and the criteria used to make decisions

What will it mean for educational settings?

Approximately 12 schools and settings will be visited – mainstream and special, in all phases. Information gathered from settings will include

- Identification – school census data
- **Contribution to local offer (information report)**
- Provision management processes – how do schools and other settings identify/assess/make additional provision/monitor and review provision
- Evidence of **effective multi-agency support**
- Discussions with staff
- Discussions with children and families
- Sample files (will include CLA and medical needs)

There will be **no observations of lessons/service delivery**

Preparing for the Local Area Review

As I have done before, I would ask all settings to;

1. Check and confirm that your **information report** is published.
2. Promote the **Local Offer** at *every opportunity* with parents and add the link on your website
3. Capture how parents/carer voice and the voice of children influences policy and actions
4. Record how the Local Area works with you to implement the reforms and how it can improve and give us your thoughts

Education Services 2018/19

I have attached the current structure of the Education Services Division for your reference (since 1st March 2018).

Before I finish, I want to thank you again for all that you have done to date. There are challenges before us but as a community we can meet them. Please do contact me or any of the managers in Education Services if we can offer you assistance. Please do **forward this letter** to your SENCO for their consideration.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick O'Dwyer', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Patrick O'Dwyer
Divisional Director Education Services