

**Shellina Prendergast – Member - Maidstone Rural East
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

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Dear Colleagues,

Re: SEND Inclusion

We are writing to thank you for your continued commitment and efforts to achieve our shared aim which is to make Kent a county that works for all children and young people.

Education is concerned with supporting social development and participation skills, as well as academic attainment, all of which contribute to preparing children and young people for adult life and taking their place as active citizens in their community. We are fully aware of the work going on across all educational providers to address COVID 19 learning gaps, as well as business as usual, and have been really pleased to both hear about and see some of the great range of work that is going on to support the development of children and young people.

You will know of the particular challenges in Kent related to Special Educational Needs and Disability and that these can only be addressed through us all working together in close partnership. Specialist provision and schools play a critical role in the continuum of educational provision in Kent, and we fully acknowledge the crucial work they undertake with children and families. We are committed to ensuring that continues, as for some pupils a special school is undoubtedly the most appropriate provision. Similarly, mainstream provision and schools are playing a critical role in ensuring that the needs of as many pupils as possible are being met in the setting that is most suitable for them.

A big focus currently is on developing the role of mainstream settings and schools in the SEND education continuum. There are a number of reasons for this but the most important is the benefit to many families when their child can attend a local provider or school. We already have many mainstream schools that are successfully educating children with additional and special needs. We want to build on and extend this successful practice so that all children and young people have the same opportunities regardless of where they live.

Within KCC, we are in the midst of a complex transformation programme as the new SEND leadership team modernise and better configure specialist services to meet needs, within the available budget. The Education team are focusing on better understanding the needs of mainstream providers and schools in particular and providing appropriate support. Alongside this, work continues with health partners to ensure they too address areas for improvement.

Despite all the challenges, it has been really heartening to see the response from leadership teams to the SEND transformation programmes and projects on offer. There is a considerable amount of time and commitment needed to complete these programmes and we are really pleased to see the level of uptake of the SEND Inclusion Leadership and the Nurture Schools programmes. Officers are carefully considering feedback to ensure programmes are fine-tuned, for example, to take account of particular challenges within small schools.

There is a huge amount of work going on and we are very appreciative of the very significant contribution that Early Years, schools, colleges and other providers are making to this improvement journey.

Yours sincerely



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Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Kent County Council



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