



# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

[www.specialschoolsvoice.com](http://www.specialschoolsvoice.com)

## WHAT IS SPECIAL SCHOOLS' VOICE?

**We would like to take this opportunity to introduce a new collaboration, Special Schools' Voice (SSV). For a number of months a group of like-minded colleagues have been meeting to consider if the voice of Special schools could be brought together, to have a more coherent and definite impact.**

We have widely consulted with Specials schools across the country to seek their views about the establishment of a collaborative that brings together a number of existing associations/groups to represent special schools in a more coherent manner. Responses to a questionnaire sent out earlier in the year strongly supported this proposal, so we are now endeavouring to progress the idea. We feel strongly that in order for SSV to have the impact we seek it needs to be well organised and be centred upon highly effective communication channels that will connect schools to decision makers. In today's world of websites and Twitter we think that this is all possible. We are anticipating there being no cost to special schools to become involved with SSV.

At present Government agencies such as the Department for Education and OFSTED, seek the opinion of some of the larger associations that represent Special schools e.g. the SSAT, The National Education Trust, SWALSS and more recently

groupings of Special Teaching schools and Special converted academies. In total, according to the DfE census data (2014), there are 97,395 pupils attending 964 special schools. This is 1.2% of the school population.

Head teachers often talk of their frustration that their views, and the interests of their schools, insufficiently influence the formation of national policy. We are therefore asking if we could do things differently, so that these colleagues and their schools feel empowered and involved. At the same time Government policy could be further enhanced and constructed with an understanding of its impact on all children and young people.

SSV does not wish to merely "rehearse the challenges" but sees itself supporting agencies in finding solutions to the challenges we collectively face. We would then envisage that our collective knowledge will be able to signpost agencies to best practice, around the country, to support the development of co constructing system led policies and practice.

Our website has been designed to provide a forum for people involved in special schools to provide their views and to inform future policy and practice. We would really welcome your involvement and engagement with SSV.

## OUR AIMS

**Special Schools' Voice is looking to provide a means for special schools to speak collectively and be heard so that we can ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and young people we work with. Our aims are to:**

**Help teachers speak with one voice:** by creating a collaborative assembly with special schools and academies across the country.

**Influence policy:** by listening to the issues faced by special schools and academies, so we can be a proactive partner in policy making and implementing practice.

**Influence educational thinking at national level:** by ensuring that government agencies are aware of the implications of education policy on special schools and their pupils.

**Support agencies:** by ensuring they understand the education needs of the very complex and diverse population within special schools and academies during their consultations.

**Promote special needs education:** by raising the profile of special schools and academies.

**Represent special schools and academies:** by listening to their views and aspirations, and feeding back issues for discussion and debate.

**Act as a catalyst:** by working with national and regional organisations that represent special schools and academies.

**Be effective:** by operating as an accountable, not-for-profit, professional organisation within an identified quality assurance framework.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

**By helping special schools to speak as one, Special Schools' Voice can create the best possible outcomes for children and young people. The underpinning principles of this Collaborative are efficiency, effectiveness, integrity and accountability. Our objectives are:**

**Connect with key government agencies:** by establishing constructive and professional relationships with agencies including Ofsted, the Department for Education and the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

**Create an effective special schools network:** by facilitating and enhancing two-way communication between special schools and academies, and connecting with regional groupings of special schools across the country.

**Collaborate with relevant national organisations:** by working with other like-minded national organisations that represent SEN, we can communicate consistent and unified messages to government agencies.

*We value equality, fairness and diversity within schools and colleges and beyond.*

## JOIN THE DISCUSSION

### **Pupil Premium: What is the impact on Special Schools?**

The introduction of the Pupil Premium by the coalition government was one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed during the last parliament. The aspiration of closing the stubborn attainment gap, evident in specific groups of children, was seen as being core to the educational aims of the government. But how has this impacted on special schools?

### **16-25: Our chance to shape the young adult agenda**

The new Children and Families Act 2014 handed us all a chance to give every child a better start in life. It's time to speak as one, through Special Schools' Voice, and be proactive in our response to one of the greatest transforming opportunities many of us have ever seen.

### **Funding: How is it affecting your school?**

The level of funding we receive enables us to create and provide, but it also restricts what we are able to do. As with mainstream school funding, the use of the high-needs block is significantly different across the country. It would be interesting to compare the way needs are met and to discover the many differences in the way the finance is allocated and used.

### **SEN ITT: Your input is vital**

The SALT report (2010) described how specialist routes had disappeared at initial teacher training level. At the same time, we are seeing an increase in the range and complexity of pupils' needs and as a profession we are rightly challenged to perform to the highest level. So are those working in special schools being sufficiently well prepared for the challenges ahead?

### **Life Without Levels**

National Curriculum levels are only statutory for pupils at the end of key stages this year and will have been totally removed by next year. However, P scales are remaining and at present there is an ongoing requirement to report P-scale achievement at the end of each key stage. This is a confusing time for all schools. So how do we deal with this conundrum?

## HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

- Visit our website and join the discussion
- Sign up to our email list and receive regular updates
- Find us on Facebook: [specialschoolsvoice](#)
- Follow us on Twitter [@specialschools](#)
- Help us spread the word and get the conversation going

## CONTACT

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**Listening to schools  
Shaping the National Agenda**

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