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## Rona Tutt - Special Educational Needs Blog



This series covers both residential and mainstream education and is written by Dr Rona Tutt, a former Chair of NAHT Special Education Needs Committee

The feeling that there's been a change of government, rather than simply a new Prime Minister and a reshuffled cabinet, continues, as the long awaited **Education for All Bill** was announced as having been given the chop. And with it goes any remaining threat of forced academisation. The expectation is that this may clear the way for a Bill based on the Green Paper, **Schools that work for everyone**, whose consultation remains live until 12<sup>th</sup> December. Such a Bill is likely to be equally contentious, with its emphasis on having an increase in selective schools, otherwise known as grammar schools.

The sense that a different regime has taken over, has been added to by recent announcements by Justine Greening, including:

- The year 7 re-sits won't go ahead
- The KS1 spelling, punctuation & grammar test will remain non-statutory
- The EYFS profile will remain in place for now
- There will be no new tests or national assessments before 2018
- There will be a consultation on Primary Assessment in the New Year.

All these sound promising, not least for pupils with SEND.

On 10<sup>th</sup> October, the new education team had its first outing in Parliament. In his response to a question about many special schools becoming oversubscribed, Edward Timpson, said:

***"We have managed to secure over £200 million of capital funding for special schools to increase the number of placements.....I'm sure that there will be many people.....right across England, who will be looking forward to seeing how they can improve the facilities and the support available for children with SEN."***

He went on to say that the government would be announcing further details shortly, including when local authorities could apply.

Now that the Department has expanded its sphere of influence, Robert Halfon, MP for Harlow, (who was born with mild cerebral palsy), has been appointed to deal with post-16 issues, including apprenticeships, where he hopes to find ways of making them more inclusive for those with disabilities. He was the first MP to have a full-time apprentice working in Parliament and is currently on his fourth one.

## The Rochford Review

The main news in October specifically about SEND, was the release of *The Rochford Review: final report - Review of assessment for pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests*. The first recommendation is to remove the statutory requirement to assess pupils using P scales. Instead Rochford suggests dividing those previously assessed on P scales into 2 groups:

- those who follow a subject-based curriculum (formerly P5-P8)
- those who are not engaged in subject-based learning (P1 - P4).

So, the next recommendation is that the interim pre-key stage standards are i) made permanent and ii) extended to cover all pupils engaged in subject-based learning.

For those previously at P1-P4, the recommendations are that, while pupils should be assessed in the four areas of need outlined in the SEND Code of Practice, statutory assessment should be limited to the area of cognition and learning, using seven aspects of engagement. These originate from the DfE-funded Complex Learning Difficulties & Disabilities (CLDD) Project, which was led by Prof Barry Carpenter from 2009-2011 and resulted in the **Complex Needs online training materials**. The Engagement Scale appears in Module 3.2. The seven aspects are:

- responsiveness
- curiosity

### Recent posts

**Rounding off a busy year in SEND**  
24/12/2014

**And so we find ourselves back in a further consultation**  
25/11/2014

**A flurry of SEND publications**  
29/09/2014

**Awaiting the debate on the SEND Code of Practice**  
17/07/2014

**Developments in getting the new SEN framework in place**  
09/05/2014

**NAHT Conference and the very latest changes to the SEN Framework**  
31/03/2014

**The Children & Families Bill now awaits Royal Assent**  
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**An update on the Bill and changes to the SEN Framework**  
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**Draft of the SEN Code of Practice - a bit like waiting for buses**  
29/10/2013

**Heading for a high profile year for SEN or SEND**  
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- discovery
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However, it is left to schools to decide how to approach these assessments. The final recommendations are about the need for ITT and CPD to support teachers' understanding of the assessment of pupils working below the level of NC tests and for schools who have developed an expertise in this area to share their knowledge with other schools.

## News from other organisations

### EQUALS

Some of you may be familiar with EQUALS, the charity supporting the work of teachers of pupils with profound, multiple and severe learning difficulties. Peter Imray has written to say that the first four schemes of work in the brand new Equals Semi-Formal (SLD) Curriculum are now available at **Equals**. These are: My Communication, My Independence, My Thinking and Problem Solving and My Play and Leisure. Four further schemes of work to complete the Curriculum (My Creativity, My Physical Well-being, My Citizenship and The World About Me) should be available by December 2017.

### Nasen

Next year, the nasen Live event will be held at the ICC in Birmingham on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Early bird tickets are available until 31<sup>st</sup> December. I'm looking forward to speaking to the Wirral Branch in November, together with Dr Adam Boddison, the chief executive of nasen.

### Young Carers in Schools

Jess Hill tells me that Young Carers in Schools, which is run jointly by the Carers Trust and The Children's Society, is now working with over 750 schools across England. Almost 500 young carers who were previously unknown to school staff were discovered in just 35 of the schools taking part in the programme - an average of 15 per school. A number of resources are available to support schools in this worthwhile enterprise. Further details can be found on the **Young Carers in Schools website**.

## Meetings and Events

At the September meeting of the Special Education Consortium (SEC), there were presentations from two members of the group who were willing to succeed Niki Elliot as chair. At the October meeting, Kate Fallon who heads the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) was announced as the new chair. She has a wealth of experience to bring to the post from her time as a teacher, an EP and leader of a national organisation. Furthermore, she has been in the midst of the SEND Reforms. The October agenda included initial reactions to the Green Paper, which found little favour among the many organisations who were present.

NAHT's SEND Council held its first meeting of the term on 13<sup>th</sup> Sept at TUC's Congress House in London, which was very quiet as most of its inhabitants had left for the seaside, in order to attend the TUC Conference which was on at the same time in Brighton. In addition to finalising the details of our 2017 conference to be held in Birmingham on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> & Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March - with the option of coming for the day on Friday or starting, as previously, on Thursday, in the meeting we were pleased to hear that NAHT is already proposing dates for our Special Schools, Specialist and Alternative Provision Conference in 2018. Among other items discussed were the difficulty of attracting good quality teachers to take on the role of SENCO and NAHT's involvement with the DfE's stakeholder group looking at CAMHS.

The SEND Council meets again on Mon 7<sup>th</sup> November, when we look forward to visiting Ruth Bonny's school: The Royal Cross Primary School in Preston. A lengthy agenda includes: contributing to NAHT's responses to The Rochford Review and the consultation on the Green Paper; the Association's work, including with other key organisations, on mental health and wellbeing; the overhaul of post-16 provision; and Estyn's Annual Report on education in Wales.

The National SEND Forum (NSENDF) held its twice termly meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> October. The first CQC/Ofsted Area SEND Reviews were discussed, with a range of views being expressed about their effectiveness. However, there was agreement that i) it was another way of checking the impact of the SEND Reforms and ii) Inspectors were learning as they went along and adjusting the process accordingly. The latest SEND Statistics show that fewer pupils are being identified for SEN Support, but more are appearing to need special school places. Reasons were put forward as to why this might be the case and it was agreed to compile a paper on SEND provision, with recommendations for using it more effectively. A response to the Green Paper will be sent from the group, as well as from individual organisations.

## Joint Unions meeting on SEND Issues

This meets once a term at ATL. On 19<sup>th</sup> Oct, all six teaching unions were present, plus a representative from Unison and three colleagues from the DfE, including Chris Eridani-Ball, who assured us that the Rochford Review would come out 'very shortly' - it appeared a matter of hours later. Various concerns were expressed about Assessment and the difficulties caused, in particular to pupils with SEND. Chris seemed to find the comments useful and promised to take them back, not just to the SEND Department, but across the DfE as a whole, as part of his role is to make sure SEND is embedded in their thinking. It was pointed out that this wasn't apparent in the Green Paper, which received a largely hostile reception.

I hope the half-term holiday afforded you a slight break from the incessant demands of school life and gave you sufficient energy for the rest of the term.

*Please note that there are a number of upcoming NAHT events that you may be interested in. These*

include:

- **Decoding mental health; promoting emotional wellbeing**
- **Ofsted and the SENCO: the new framework and expectations**
- **The SENCO as a strategic leader**
- **Special schools, specialist and alternative provision conference 2017**

For information on all our upcoming events, please click [here](#).

04 November 2016

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### NAHT Headquarters

1 Heath Square  
Bolton Road  
Haywards Heath  
West Sussex  
RH16 1BL

info@naht.org.uk  
0300 30 30 333

### NAHT Northern Ireland

Carnmoney House  
Edgewater Office Park  
Belfast  
BT3 9JQ

nahtni@naht.org.uk  
02890 776633

### NAHT Cymru

9 Columbus Walk  
Brigantine Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 4BY

cymru@naht.org.uk  
029 20484546

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General Secretary of NAHT  
generalsecretary@naht.org.uk

President of NAHT  
president@naht.org.uk



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