

Socialist Educational Association Scotland

The SEAS wishes to submit the following statements on the most recent report on additional support for learning which the committee is discussing.

The Socialist Educational Association Scotland is the educational affiliate of the Scottish Labour Party.

Inadequate Response, inadequate report

The SEAS feels this report and the government's response is inadequate in resolving the challenges within education in supporting schools and education authorities in meeting the additional support for learning requirements.

Impact of poverty and austerity

In terms of the government response, it fails to take account of the impact of growing poverty and inequality arising from austerity measures mentioned in the report. As the numbers of children in poverty have increased in recent years so has the numbers of children and young people requiring additional support. The SEAS is of the view that these increases are related.

Budget cuts

The report highlights the impact of cuts in staffing. In January 2019 the Scottish Labour Party raised the question of cuts in support for learning staff, teachers and assistants in Scottish Parliament. Instead of investing in our education authorities and schools budgets continue to be cut.

Ignores human rights concerns and international best practice

The report ignores concerns of international organisations such as the Reporter of United Nations Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities who in 2017 highlighted concerns with the lack of an inclusive strategy in education in the UK. He was also concerned about rising numbers in segregated special schools. These concerns still remain but were not engaged with by the Report.

Scottish Government is a member of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. The Report has no reference or information drawn from its extensive research base on this area. Ignoring the work of the agency is a serious weakness.

Weaknesses in segregated special schools

The report is very poor on aspects of weaknesses in education in segregated special schools despite their high levels of funding. The ENABLE report's evidence that over 60% of children in special schools do not feel they are supported or doing well is also ignored. Surely the feelings of children in special schools matters too.