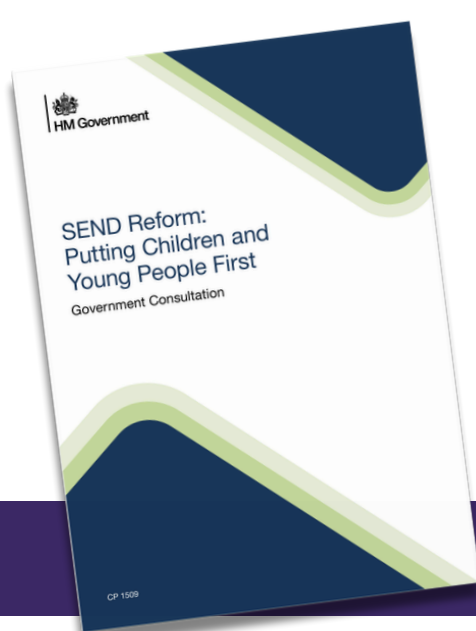




Responding to the SEND reform consultation

Tips for completing your response

Alongside NASS's collective response on behalf of members and special schools, it is essential that individual schools and organisations contribute directly to the SEND reform consultation. Multiple responses will help ensure the realities of special school provision are fully recognised. We have pulled together a few tips to help you with writing your response.



Be concise and make every word count

Many questions have a 1,500-character limit (around 250 words), so every word counts. Use clear, direct language and recognised abbreviations (e.g. EHCP, SEND) to maximise space. DfE has confirmed it will be using AI to analyse responses, so clarity and precision are essential.



Anchor answers in lived experience

Use short, concrete examples from your school (e.g. tribunal cases, delays in EHCPs, staffing challenges, placement breakdowns).



Be specific about impact on pupils with severe and complex needs

Explicitly reference pupils with profound, multiple, or long-term needs who are least able to "fit" simplified or standardised systems.



Respond as a provider, not just an individual

Make clear that your response reflects institutional experience, year-on-year trends, and the needs of pupils with the most complex SEND.



Highlight unintended consequences

Clearly explain what may not work in practice for children with complex needs, especially where reforms assume mainstream capacity or consistency.



Explain what already works well

Identify aspects of the current system that support children effectively in special schools and could be strengthened rather than removed.



Describe pressures on special schools

Include workforce shortages, funding insufficiency, increasing complexity of need, growth in pupils placed late or in crisis, and rising parental mistrust.



Address SEND tribunals honestly

Emphasise why tribunals are often a last resort for families and providers, and what earlier, better decision-making could prevent escalation.



Use clear, professional language

Avoid overly emotional wording, but do not dilute concerns. Plain, direct statements carry more weight than generalised phrases.



Be future-focused but realistic

If you support elements of reform, explain what conditions must be in place for success (e.g. phased rollout, pilots, safeguards). Respond even if you disagree with the framing – but make sure you highlight your criticisms.



Link policy proposals to capacity and funding reality

Where reforms require new activity or responsibilities, state clearly what additional funding, training, or time would be needed to deliver them safely.



Answer the question asked – then add context

Keep responses structured and relevant but use open text boxes to add essential nuance where questions feel too narrow.



Reflect parental trust and confidence

Share what special schools hear from families about consistency, transparency, and accountability in the SEND system.

Consultation

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/send-strategy-division/send-reform-putting-children-and-young-people-firs/consultation/intro/>

You can also respond to the consultation by email

SENDreform.CONSULTATION@education.gov.uk

or post

SENDAP Reform, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT

Deadline for submitting a response

18th May 2026

Need any further support?

If you have any questions or would like further support, please contact NASS Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Mari Davis, at mdavis@nassschools.org.uk

Follow us

