

**UK Parliament  
Department for Education  
Call for Evidence: Solving the SEND Crisis**

**Written evidence provided by Vasilis Strogilos**

I am an Associate Professor of Education at the Southampton Education School, University of Southampton specialised in the education and inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in mainstream schools. I have worked as a teacher in mainstream and special schools in England and Greece and in the higher education systems in Greece and Singapore prior to my current post. I am submitting this evidence to share my research experience/findings in relation to the development of inclusive practices in mainstream schools for students with SEND. I have selected a few of your questions to provide evidence.

***Support for children and young people with SEND:***

***How can inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools and early years settings be improved to achieve consistent, high quality SEN support? What is the DfE's role in this?***

There are many ways to improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools. Below, I will describe one based on my recent research on resourced provision (RP):

To support the effective delivery of the curriculum for students with SEND in the mainstream school, resourced provision should play a vital role. A recent study I conducted on resource provision in three mainstream schools in Hampshire (Strogilos & Ward, 2023) indicated two different models in the conceptualisation and practice of RP; either as an inclusive service to promote the education and inclusion of students with SEND in mainstream classroom/school, or as a space for specialised provision with opportunities for inclusion. In the 'inclusive service' model, students belonging to the RP are primarily educated in mainstream classrooms with RP staff's support and have individual or small group activities in the RP. In the 'safe space' model, students are primarily educated in RP class and spend a few hours per day/week in the mainstream class. RP as a service should be prioritised, because it can promote the academic and social inclusion of students with SEND and their education alongside their peers. However, flexibility in the use of both models is needed for those students who we do not yet know how to include in mainstream classes.

In 2024, I co-designed a [resourced provision toolkit](#) with parents, students and personnel from three mainstream schools in Hampshire, which includes effective practices to support the delivery of an inclusive curriculum to students with SEND in mainstream schools. The toolkit describes the practices and processes that schools need to consider when educating students in mixed provision (i.e. RP and mainstream classrooms). In particular, it includes eight areas that schools need to consider for students with SEND when educated in RP and mainstream classrooms and illustrative examples. It can be used by primary schools as a tool to evaluate and improve their own practice. By reflecting on the practices offered in the

toolkit, schools can consider: i) How to improve the education of students with SEND and their inclusion in the mainstream school; ii) How to improve school collaboration with external professionals and the parents of these students; and iii) How to improve educators' learning about inclusive provision.

What DfE can do:

1. Increase the number of resource provision in mainstream schools to decrease the need for more special schools that the previous government considered important.
2. Change the name from 'resource provision base or environment' in policy documents, which indicates 'a separate place' in the mainstream school, to 'resource provision inclusive service' which indicates resource provision as a service to the rest of the school. By doing so, students with SEND will be supported by the resource provision staff in the mainstream class most of the time and when they need individual or small-group support in the RP class.
3. Currently the students with SEND are enrolled at RP bases in mainstream schools and not at the mainstream school itself. All students with SEND should be enrolled to the mainstream school and have an allocated mainstream class. This will eliminate the separatist approach that RP bases currently have in mainstream schools.
4. Merge RP base and SEND Units into 'Resource provision inclusive service', as described above. Both serve students with SEND in mainstream schools and there is no need to have two names for very similar practices.
5. The main goal should be to increase the time students with SEND spend in mainstream class and to decrease the time they spend in the RP space to support them in learning the mainstream curriculum.

Strogilos, V & Ward, R. J. (2023). Resourced Provision in Mainstream Schools for Students With Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities: Inclusive Service or Safe Space? *Journals of Research in Special Educational Needs*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12622>

Strogilos, V, Barron, C., & Ward, B. (2023). Inclusive provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A resourced provision toolkit. University of Southampton. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.southampton.ac.uk/~assets/doc/Resource%20Provision%20Toolkit%20-%20FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/~assets/doc/Resource%20Provision%20Toolkit%20-%20FINAL-1.pdf)

### ***Outcomes for children and young people with SEND and how these can be improved?***

The learning outcomes of children and young people with SEND in school can be improved with appropriate curriculum modifications and adaptations based on their current knowledge, interests and learning preferences. I would support the delivery of differentiated instruction for all students in the mainstream classroom, especially for students with SEND. Differentiated instruction should not be confused with ability grouping. It is very important all teachers to provide curriculum modifications and adaptations to support the individual needs of all students and to break down barriers to opportunity for

every child. Many of my MSc students who are active teachers currently use GenAI to help them in designing differentiated tasks for their students in class. Hence, the use of Gen AI can support teachers in designing differentiated activities, which means that nowadays is easier for teachers to differentiate the curriculum.

My research evidence about the use of DI in mainstream classrooms for students with SEND has shown that teachers have misunderstandings about differentiated instruction. They mainly consider differentiated instruction as an approach to divide students in ability groups (Strogilos, et al., 2021) and they do not provide a variety of modifications for students with SEND, prioritising 'pseudo-differentiation' such as different colour papers or a choice of activities that do not vary significantly in complexity or level of change (Strogilos, et al., 2028).

What DfE can do:

1. To clarify the policy regarding curriculum modifications, adaptations, reasonable adjustments, etc. by inviting experts to make recommendations on how to enhance inclusive teaching through differentiated instruction. The recent emphasis on 'adaptive curriculum' which recently appeared in some policy documents has contributed to this confusion.
2. To fund research studies, especially those which include transformative elements (e.g. dialogic research, participatory research) to learn how GenAI can support teachers in differentiating their instruction.
3. To fund research that can create communities of practice for teachers and other online sources to enhance teachers' capacity in differentiated instruction.
4. To fund online training related to differentiated instruction.

Strogilos, V., Avramidis, E., Voulagka, A., & Tragoulia, E. (2018). Differentiated Instruction for Students with Disabilities in Early Childhood Co-Taught Classrooms: Types and Quality of Modifications. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1466928>

Strogilos, V., Lim, L., Buhari, N. (2021). Differentiated Instruction for Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classrooms: Contextual Features and Types of Curriculum Modifications. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Education*.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1984873>

### **What can be done to improve the effectiveness of multi-agency and joined up working cross education, health and social care?**

To assess the progress and to support the learning of students with SEND in mainstream schools, you need a multidisciplinary team (e.g. teacher, educational psychologist, speech therapist). A very big number of studies and reports has indicated several challenges in multi-disciplinary collaboration such as time constraints, resource limitations, working environments and lack of communication among professionals (e.g. Birch et al., 2023; [Research and Analysis: Supporting SEND](#))

What DfE can do:

1. To support multi-agency collaboration, DfE needs to provide school-based employment for health and social professionals (i.e. directly employed by schools) and not as visiting professionals. Many schools in Finland, Greece and in the USA, employ health and social professionals directly in schools or through school districts. This can improve structured communication and collaboration among professionals of different disciplines to enhance student academic and social outcomes.

Birch, S., Bow, S., Lang, J., & Dunsmuir, S. (2023). Interprofessional collaboration between educational psychologists and speech and language therapists in the UK: facilitators and barriers. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 38(6), 735-750.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2023.2172890>

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