Ofsted research into how children and young people with SEND are supported in mainstream schools

You Said, We Did

Thank you to all the young people from Wirral Youth Matters who helped Ofsted with the research project ‘Supporting SEND’, which is examining how children and young people with SEND are supported in mainstream schools.

You helped us figure out the best way to make sure the children and young people we will speak to have given us their informed consent to take part in the research. You also helped us write good questions so we can ask children and young people about their experiences.

Thank you very much indeed for all your help. We were very impressed, not only with your knowledge and insight, but also how well you supported one another so that everyone could share their views. It was wonderful to see how sensitive you were to each other’s needs and how much you helped each other.

These are some of the things we did thanks to your help. The topic guide setting out the questions is at the end of this document.

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| **You Said** | **We Did** |
| It is important to ask children and young people how they are before asking lots of questions. | The first question we ask children and young people is “How are you feeling today?” with red, orange and green flash cards for primary school pupils. |
| To find out more about children and young people, it would be good to ask them about their home life as well as school. | We have questions asking children and young people about this including: “Who is in your family? Do you have any brothers and sisters?” |
| It is important give children and young people something visual to help them answer questions. | For primary pupils we are asking them to bring some work they are proud of to talk about.  For secondary students we have ‘get to know me’ flashcards showing different subjects and activities. |
| Schools can exclude children and young people from subjects and extracurricular activities. | We have questions asking about how included children or young people feel in their school for example:  “Do you feel like you can do everything that you’d like to do while you’re at school?” |
| You gave us a huge number of suggestions for good questions to ask, such as:  “Do the adults know what help you need?”  “Is there any support you need that you don’t get?” | We included as many of these wonderful questions as we could. We can only speak to each child/young person for 30 minutes so we could not include everything. |
| Children and young people need to have the questions in advance. | We will give the children and young people their questions in advance. |
| Children and young people can find Ofsted intimidating. | We have an introductory text for inspectors to say they are not going to check on the child/young person’s work or inspect their school. |
| You would prefer people to talk about your needs and disabilities rather than not doing so for fear of offending. | We will ask questions about needs and disabilities. We have said in the introductory text for secondary students:  “When we ask you about your special educational needs and disabilities, we may accidentally ask things in a blunt way. If you are offended or made uncomfortable by what we ask please do tell us, and we will apologise.” |
| It would be good to use something like a video or dance to help explain informed consent to children and young people. | We unfortunately do not have the resources to use drama or creative arts. The idea of a video to explain informed consent has met with positive feedback from Ofsted so far and we will try and make this happen. |

**Ofsted topic guide for secondary students with an EHCP**

Hello. My name is [your name] and this is [colleague’s name]. How are you today? [Check what the child/young person would like to be called].

We are from an organisation called Ofsted. Have you heard of Ofsted?

[Change what you say to show you have listened to the child/young person e.g. That’s right. Ofsted inspects schools and councils to make sure children and young people receive good education and care].

We are here today to talk about you and your school. We are interested in what support you get to study, and so we will be asking you about your special educational needs and/or disabilities. We’re here to carry out research, not to check your work or inspect your school. We want to learn more about your experiences, so we can get better at evaluating schools and councils when we carry out inspections in future.

When we ask you about your special educational needs and/or disabilities, we may accidentally ask things in a blunt way. If you are offended or made uncomfortable by what we ask please do tell us, and we will apologise. Equally, if you need a break, please say. If you want to stop talking to us, you can any time.

What you tell us will stay private and no one will know what you said. The only reason we will tell anyone is if we think we must, to keep you or someone else safe. When we write our research report we will also make sure we don’t say anything which might allow others to identify who you are.

I am now going to ask you some questions. If you want me to ask the question again or in another way please do say, that’s fine.

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| **Main Question** | **Probes** |
| Can you please tell me all about yourself? | How are you feeling today?    Who is in your family? Do you have any brothers and sisters?    Do you have any pets?    What do you like to do when you’re not in school?  Do you do any after school activities?    What job would you like when you leave school? |
| Can you please tell me about the things that make learning difficult/hard for you?  [Check whether the child or young person knows that we call this a special educational need.] | How does your [use the same language as the child] affect you? To what extent do you feel it limits what you can do?    How did you find out you had [the SEND, using the child’s language]?    How old were you when you first learned you had a SEND? How did you feel when you found out?    Were any other groups or agencies involved? Which ones?    I believe you have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Do you know what it says? How much involvement did you have in deciding what it says you need? |
| Thank you. I’d now like to find out a bit about what subjects you like and don’t like.    Get to know me card game: show flash cards of different subjects and activities. | Which of these subjects and activities do you like? Why?    And which you don’t like? Why?    Do you feel like you can do everything that you’d like to do while you’re at school? Ask why not if there are any the pupil says they cannot do.    Do you need support to do any of these subjects and activities? If so what. Why do you need it? Who do you get this support from?    Do you get the opportunity to tell adults at your school what it is you need? Do the adults know what support you need?    How many people are in your class? Where can children go if they feel they need to calm down?    How included do you feel in the classroom? Do you feel involved or do you sometimes feel left out?    Is there any support you need that you don’t get? Can you tell me more about it? |
| What could happen to make your experience at school (even) better? | What can the adults and other children do to help you?    What other support could you get? |