

Consultation on Validation of Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Programmes, 2021

A response from the Special Educational Consortium

The Special Educational Consortium (SEC) is a membership organisation that comes together to protect and promote the rights of disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN). Our membership includes the voluntary and community sector, education providers and professional associations. SEC believes that every child and young person is entitled to an education that allows them to fulfil their potential and achieve their aspirations.

SEC identifies areas of consensus across our membership and works with the Department for Education, Parliament, and other decision-makers when there are proposals for changes in policy, legislation, regulations and guidance that may affect disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Our membership includes nationally recognised experts on issues including assessment and curriculum, schools and high needs funding, the SEN legal framework, exclusions and alternative provision.

Key Questions

1. Do you consider this core criteria to cover all the elements required for a complete SSP programme?

We consider that there should be a core criterion on meeting the needs of the lowest attaining 20%.

2. If not, which core criteria are not adequately reflected and how would you incorporate these?

The additional criterion, highlighting the ways in which the programme meets the needs of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils, should be strengthened and incorporated as a core criterion. It should be strengthened: 1) to require evidence of meeting the needs of the lowest attaining 20% of pupils; and 2) to require information about the way it can be adapted to ensure access for particular groups of pupils, for example pupils with a

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hearing impairment, or pupils with a very short concentration span associated with their impairment.

3. We want to ensure that the core criteria adequately reflects the needs of those with protected characteristics^[1]. Please let us know if you identify any gaps in fulfilling this aim, and any ways in which we can better ensure that SSP programmes are able to demonstrate that they are meeting the needs of all children.

See above. We consider that schemes should not be validated without being able to demonstrate both benefit and accessibility for all pupils.

Philippa Stobbs
Policy vice-chair
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^[1] Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The relevant 'protected characteristics' for the purposes of the Public Sector Equality Duty are: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race (including ethnicity), Religion or belief, Sex, and Sexual orientation.