



BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bexley Labour Group response to the SEND Bexley inspection

We are incredibly disappointed to see the latest OFSTED ruling for the SEND inspection of the Bexley Local Area Partnership, which has rated Bexley with the worst grading **'With widespread and/or systemic failings leaving significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND (Special Educational needs and/or disabilities)**.

We acknowledge officers in Children's services and Education work hard for the children of Bexley and they are already taking the necessary steps required to rectify areas of improvement. We support them in doing this work, and thank them for their hard work, care and dedication to Bexley's Children and Young people.

We also know that many of the issues raised from the report stem from the National Government's chronic underfunding of local authorities and the national government's failure to recognise the growing financial pressures in Children's Services seriously. It is concerning and utterly outrageous that parents and carers have had to take on the cost of privately funding assessments for their children, during a cost-of-living crisis. How many more parents and carers are unaccounted for, as they do not have the resources to privately fund.

Whilst the grading has come as a shock to some members of the Conservative Council, it did not come as a shock to many of us in Bexley Labour Group. We have consistently raised the concerns of parents specifically around the areas of EHC Plans (Education, Health, and Care) and yet these concerns have been ignored. We have continuously raised the fact that many parents were getting in touch to let us know that EHC plans were either out of date, insufficient and in some cases had not been issued. It is not surprising that Ofsted noticed the variable nature of the quality of the EHC plans and that there is an inconsistency of approach in devising them. When these issues were raised with the cabinet members at scrutiny meetings, the response was all is fine and there is not a problem. Instead suggesting that schools, parents, and carers had got this wrong, clearly this is not the case.

Another issue raised, regarding the transition from childhood to adulthood especially around the transition from children's social care to adult social care, is of particular concern, because the inadequacy of the council's provision here was flagged in the 2016 SEND inspection, it was flagged as an area of improvement, and yet here we are 8 years later with those issues still not resolved. .

This grading is an indictment of the controlling parties lack of attention in preparing for the inspection and for not listening to parents and cares concerns.

The three areas of concern in the report are as follows.

- **Issues with EHC plans, specifically for those children and young people with lower needs**
- **Issues with preparing young people for adulthood**
- **Ensuring equity of provision across Bexley for children and young people to access speech, language, and occupational therapies in order to meet their needs.**

This result is by and large because the Cabinet Members chose to ignore the concerns of parents, carers, and families. We hope that this result will be a wakeup call to the Cabinet Members and the controlling party, to ensure no child falls through the gap, and has their needs met.

We will support officers to do the work that is required to improve the rating over the coming months and are aware that some of this work has been identified and started to be actioned.



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We know this, because many of the Officers were the ones who delivered Bexley the Children's Services Outstanding rating, we want to thank them for their hard work, and the hard work that they will continue to do, to ensure our provision to children with SEND improves and is fair.