

Department for Education

Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, for what reasons children's play is not prioritized in the five foundations for building character.

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether the audit of out of school activities will include playing outside.

Nadhim Zahawi The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education

World-class education is not only about having the highest standards in academic and technical education, it also means ensuring that education builds character and resilience.

We want all children and young people to have opportunities to develop the key character traits of believing that they can achieve, being able to stick with the task in hand, seeing a link between effort today and reward in the future, and being able to bounce back from the knocks that life inevitably brings to all of us. Character must also be grounded in positive values such as kindness, generosity, fairness, tolerance and integrity.

The 5 Foundations for Building Character announced on 7 February by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education are sport, creativity, performing, volunteering and membership, and the world of work. Each of these areas covers a very wide range of activities that children and young people can enjoy doing. In developing key character traits, research suggests that high-quality delivery of the 5 foundations should take a structured approach, occur over a sustained period of time, and be self-directed by the child or young person. Through the support of teachers, coaches or other professionals, children and young people are more likely to receive a higher level of challenge and develop the traits that can help them achieve their goals.

Play can provide benefits to children and young people through physical activity and promotion of wellbeing, but the audit of the availability of out-of-school activities across the country does not currently include playing outside as that activity does not provide the structured and high quality elements that are required in character building activities as proposed in the 5 Foundations for Building Character.

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of children with autism spectrum condition who have been (a) excluded and (b) isolated in schools in the last 12 months.

Nick Gibb Minister of State (Education)

Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2016-2017 can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2016-to-2017>.

Permanent and fixed period exclusions by type of special educational need can be found in national table 6.

The information requested, on the number of children with autism spectrum condition who have been isolated in schools in the last 12 months, is not held centrally.

As part of Ofsted inspections, however, schools will be asked to provide records and analysis of any use of internal isolation. Ofsted inspectors will expect schools to have clear and effective behaviour policies that promote high standards of behaviour and are applied consistently and fairly. In reaching a judgement on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, inspectors will take account of a range of information, including schools' use of internal isolation.

The Department's behaviour and discipline guidance to schools makes clear that schools must act lawfully, reasonably and proportionately when using isolation, and must take account of any special education needs or disabilities pupils placed in isolation may have.

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons), Chair, Liaison Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps the Government is taking to ensure the effectiveness of cross-departmental work to tackle the referral of children and young people with (a) depression and (b) mental health issues.

Nick Gibb Minister of State (Education)

The Department for Education has a joint programme of work with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Health Education England to deliver the proposals set out in the green paper 'Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision'. This includes setting up and running Mental Health Support Teams linked to groups of schools and colleges. The teams will be made up of additional, trained, mental health workers, supervised by suitable NHS staff working closely with other professionals such as

educational psychologists, school nurses, counsellors and social workers.

The first teams will be set up in 25 trailblazer areas this year, which will be evaluated to inform the subsequent roll-out. The Department has put in place a small regional implementation team to work alongside NHS England to support delivery of the green paper commitments and lead and model effective partnership working for education and health.

The Government is also taking action to support specific vulnerable groups of children. In May 2016, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission began inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling the new duties on education, health and social care services to provide for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). All 152 local areas in England will be inspected over a period of five years. The inspections are identifying how effectively access to mental health provision is working as part of the SEND provision locally.

The Department is also piloting new mental health assessments for looked-after children to ensure young people are assessed at the right time to support more effective access to mental health provision, with a focus on meeting their individual needs as they enter care.