



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

LONDON SW1A 0AA

7<sup>th</sup> March 2018

*John Conaghan*

**RE: AUTISM AND EDUCATION.**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of supporting autistic children in school.

It is essential, as you mention, that we have an education system that works for all children, including those with special educational needs such as autism. It is vitally important that autistic children are given the additional support they deserve to achieve educational success and lead happy and fulfilling lives. This is why I welcome the recent 'Autism and Education in England 2017' joint report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism and The National Autistic Society.

While this report recognises that more can be done to support children with autism in schools, I can assure you that there has already been notable progress in improving the educational infrastructure for children with special educational needs and disabilities. In order to deliver autism awareness training and advice for teachers and other staff, the Department for Education has provided funding to voluntary sector organisations, including the Autism Education Trust (AET). I know the AET has trained more than 150,000 people since 2012, including teaching and support staff, in addition to publishing national autism standards and frameworks.

Further to this, £215 million of capital funding has also been made available to support the expansion of existing provisions for pupils with special education needs and disabilities, including those with autism. There has also been a focus on opening more specialist schools that support children with autism. Under the Free Schools Programme, there are now 29 special free schools in England, including 17 which provide places for children with autism. A further 60 special free schools are due to open in the future, 33 of which will offer provision for children with autism.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the launch of the 'Autism and Education in England 2017' report due to existing diary commitments. However, I will continue to follow this matter with great interest.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.



Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

We are of course going to have one of the new special free schools in Corby, which is very welcome news, and I am also working with a number of parents to help see improvements to local local authority provision, informed by their experiences and knowledge.