



United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Sarah McCarthy Fry
Minister for Schools and Learners (England)



Sarah McCarthy Fry's principal policy areas include school admissions, the National Curriculum and Special Educational Needs. She was elected as Labour and Co-operative MP for Portsmouth North in the 2005 general election. Born in 1955, she is the daughter of a defence worker of Scottish descent. Educated at Portsmouth High School, Ms McCarthy Fry qualified as a chartered accountant while working for multi-national engineering company GKN Westland. Before being elected and as an MP, she was financial controller for GKN Aerospace Services, based at Cowes, Isle of Wight. In 2006, Ms McCarthy Fry was made Principal Private Secretary (PPS) to John Healey, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and in the 2007 reshuffle she was appointed PPS to Chief Whip, Geoff Hoon.

The concept of inclusive education in England: excellence and equity

1. The British Government's definition of 'inclusive' education is education which delivers excellence and equity for all pupils and young people.
2. Our Children's Plan (December 2007) set out our aim to make the United Kingdom the best place in the world for children to grow up. The Plan is based on some key principles:
 - government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families;
 - all children have potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents take them;
 - children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life;
 - services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries; and
 - it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later
3. Over the period to 2011, the Government has committed itself to raise the educational achievement of all children and young people, and at the same time narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. This will contribute towards our major priority of improving inter-generational social mobility.
4. The UK approach to inclusion is founded on five key principles:
 - Every child has a right to an excellent education, and to achieve the highest standards assessed against the common benchmark of an inclusive national curriculum.
 - However, children have different educational needs. Therefore the state must secure a wide diversity of high-quality educational places – in early years settings, mainstream schools, special schools, specialist units,



colleges, training opportunities and higher education, from birth to age 19 and beyond.

- Inclusion is not achieved by forcing children into a single format, but rather by giving parents a genuine choice within a diverse, quality-assured offer of schools and other learning settings, backed up by appropriate learning support.
 - The best way to secure both excellence and inclusion is to personalise learning to enable every child, whatever their needs, to access the full national curriculum and achieve good progress at every Key Stage. Personalised learning is best delivered as a partnership between pupils, parents, educators and support services. The outcome of effective personalised learning is that every young person, regardless of background or educational needs, can achieve his or her full potential.
 - The best measure of inclusiveness of an education system is not attendance and participation – important as these are – but variance in attainment levels. In the UK, it is a top priority to narrow the gaps (variances) in progress and attainment between pupils from disadvantaged social backgrounds and their peers. This entails setting high expectations for every child, nationally, locally and at school and teacher level, and eliminating excuses for under-performance based on the pupil's origin or family circumstances.
5. Some key social gaps in the UK have narrowed substantially over the past five years, notably those by ethnicity, first language and migrant status. The gap by poverty is also reducing, and the Government has committed itself to achieving even more by 2011 and beyond. Our vision of a fully inclusive education system - excellence and equity – will only be achieved when children in England have an equal chance of success regardless of their background.