

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of
Education

www.education-ni.gov.uk

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

Kieran Ellison

Kieran.Ellison@unitetheunion.org

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Dear Mr Ellison

Thank you for your letter of 11 February 2026 relating to the recent budget announcement from Westminster.

The Department of Finance is currently engaging with HM Treasury in relation to whether Northern Ireland will receive any Barnett Consequential as a result of the £5bn in England for Special Educational Needs and Disability. If Northern Ireland does receive a Barnett Consequential, it should be assumed that this would be un-hypothecated. It would therefore be for the Executive to decide how this funding would be allocated.

The Five-Year Budget Strategy for Education remains subject to public consultation. Following which, all responses received will be carefully considered before the Department undertakes any further planning or decisions on how best to progress this work.

I appreciate that the proposed reforms to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) sector are understandably a source of concern and I would like to provide assurance that any changes to SEN support will not be driven by cost-saving objectives. However, in the current constrained financial environment, we have no choice but to reform the model of support provided to our children and young people with SEN. Failure to do so would carry significant, adverse financial implications for the wider education sector.

I remain firmly committed to ensuring that children and young people with SEN receive the appropriate, high-quality support they need within a system that is sustainable and grounded in robust evidence.

I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education