



Marie Rimmer CBE, MP
Member of Parliament for St. Helens
South & Whiston
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 4847/01744 752075

Bullying:

It is my view that the highest priority for the Department for Education and all schools should be to protect children's safety and wellbeing. Yet, I am concerned that many children are exposed to behaviour and language that no Government or school should tolerate.

Ofsted currently considers how effective a school's safeguarding measures are as part of its inspections, but I believe the safety of children is so important that school safeguarding, health and safety, and attendance should be checked every year.

Victims of bullying have frequently been subjected to unacceptable behaviour which harms their mental health and makes life utterly miserable. I am concerned children are stuck on long waiting lists for mental health services and are not receiving the appropriate intervention and support. According to the Children's Commissioner, a third of children referred to mental health services had their referral closed without receiving treatment in 2021-22.

No child should be left without the support they need to be happy and healthy, and no parent should be left feeling unsupported and alone when helping their child with mental health problems. I therefore support calls to fund better mental health services by ending tax breaks for private schools and closing tax loopholes for private equity fund managers.

Specifically, I want every young person to have access to a specialist mental health professional at school, supporting them right from the start and, where possible, resolving problems before they escalate. Every community should have an open access mental health hub for children and young people, providing early intervention through drop-in services.

My priority is the same priority as parents': for every child, a good local school where children are happy, and get a first-class education that sets them up to achieve and thrive.

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Constituency Office:

Marie Rimmer CBE, MP, 2nd Floor, Century House, Hardshaw Street, St. Helens WA10 1QU, 01744 752075,
marie.rimmer.mp@parliament.uk
Website: www.marierimmer.co.uk