



ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Policy Review Date: December 2024

Version	Date	Updated By
1	December 2023	Kate Martin

Rationale

This policy supports the school vision of a community where education is highly valued, diversity is embraced and each individual is encouraged to take control of their learning, embrace challenge and to develop into responsible young citizens. As such, the school seeks to:

- respond positively to the guidance in the DfES document 'Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils' and,
- adhere to current legislation.

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since September 2002 (revised 2014:2010), the proprietor has had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage;
- To plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

For the purposes of this policy the broad definition of 'disability' is taken from the DDA Act 1995 as follows - a person should be deemed disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These impairments include sensory impairments and learning difficulties and include certain medical conditions which may have a long-term and substantial effect on pupils' lives.

Pupils at Westbourne School will have an Education, Health and Care Plan, which recognises their complex needs that include but are not limited to a diagnosis of Autism and / or social, emotional and mental health needs. They may also have associated learning difficulties of one type or another. Whilst these difficulties may not wholly represent those presented above in the definition of disability we believe that our pupils access needs should be considered with the same level of seriousness. In addition, visitors to the school may have such difficulties and we would wish them to feel welcome to our school and to be able to access as much of it as possible.

Aims of the policy

To meet our responsibilities under the DDA the school will prepare and maintain an accessibility plan for increasing, over time, the accessibility of the school for disabled pupils and others. The plan will seek to:

- Increase and ensure the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum
- Improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services

- Improve the delivery to disabled pupils of written information which is provided to pupils who are not disabled

The Accessibility Plan

The school will develop and maintain an accessibility plan. The responsibility for the plan will rest with the senior management team. The general arrangement of the school has been implemented to be compliant with part M of the Building Regulations. The ground floor of the school is fully accessible. Where access to the first floor of the Gateway building is required a fully functional and serviced passenger lift enables this. All future site work will conform to DDA requirements. In this way the school will develop a continuous process of improvement in access.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the plan will be the responsibility of the senior management team. They will report on progress to Acorn Education and Care at regular intervals. They may use a number of indicators to measure the success of the plan including such things as:

- Greater satisfaction being expressed by both learners and their parents/carers.
- Evidence of the greater involvement of groups of learners in the full life of the school.
- Improvements in staff confidence in teaching and supporting learners.
- Improvements to the physical environment of the school.
- Information for learners in a range of formats.

The school's accessibility plan will be available to interested parties on request at reasonable times.

Accessibility Plan

Element 1: Increase access to the curriculum for learners with a physical disability and/or sensory impairments, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that all pupils are prepared for their next steps.

The school recognises that the curriculum covers not only teaching and learning but the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in leisure, sporting and cultural activities and school visits. Thus curriculum access will be considered at a whole school level as barriers to access of the curriculum can affect many different groups of pupils.

Target	Actions	Timescale	Success Criteria
During admissions assessment, identify if a learner requires specialist equipment to access the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and source specialist equipment - Staff to access training in if required 	Ongoing – takes place during assessment process prior to admission	Learners arrive at school with the appropriate equipment and resources needed to access learning
Identify appropriate clinical input and therapeutic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joined up working during admission stage - Identify clinical and therapeutic support (SALT, OT, Clinical) 	Ongoing	Learning will be supported by appropriate clinical and therapeutic services. This could include SALT support, sensory profiling etc.
Continue to maintain an annual calendar outlining a range of activities to promote learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain school calendar to encompass cultural events - All staff to contribute to the plan and implementation of plan 	Ongoing – full review to take place each term	Learners participate in a range of activities alongside the taught curriculum to widen their experiences and support growth and development
Carry out annual curriculum reviews to ensure pupils are able to access a broad curriculum for as long as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff to research own curriculum areas to identify accredited routes and experiences - 	Annually	The curriculum will be continually developed, allowing pupils to study as broadly as possible for as long as possible.

Element 2: Improve and maintain access to the physical environment of the school; adding specialist facilities as necessary.

Both Westbourne sites were schools prior to being bought by Acorn Education and opened as special needs school for young people with complex needs. As such, it already meets recent requirements of the Building Regulations and The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (2012). Further, where new furniture and equipment is being purchased in the school, such needs will be taken into consideration. For example, when purchasing carpets these will, as far as possible, be low pile, high density to facilitate the ease with which a wheelchair user could move within the buildings.

Location	Recommendation	Notes
All areas	Whenever taps and bathroom locks are to be replaced they must be replaced with lever type or similar.	
Gateway/Bridge	Car park areas to be regularly inspected to ensure minimal uneven surfaces and potholes or damaged surfaces repaired promptly Exterior step nosings to be re-painted yellow regularly and ensure contrast with doors	To be incorporated into monthly H & S inspection Requirement to re-paint to be identified on monthly H & S inspection of both sites
Gateway	Maintain lift in operational state via regular inspection and maintenance by approved contractor	External maintenance contractor regime in place
Bridge/Gateway	Upstairs offices are not easily accessible to those with mobility issues due to the steep nature of the stairs. Alternative meeting space and workspaces would need to be arranged in downstairs accessible office spaces	
Gateway	Stair nosings internally to be maintained as a contrasting colour to the stairs and the walls in order to aid with identifying stair edges	

Element 3: Improve the delivery of information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with special educational needs and/or disabilities; examples might include hand-outs, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events; the information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.

The school will continually review practice to ensure that information presented to pupils is done so in such a way as to ensure full understanding. This may involve publishing documents such as the learner handbook in different forms e.g. wholly written; re-written using language at different levels of readability; providing some information in pictorial form; offering learners the opportunity to discuss the information on offer thus using an oral rather than written approach.

Target	Actions	Timescale	Success Criteria
<p>Ensure written material is accessible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the use of online platforms to share information digitally for all. - Review learner accessibility requirements through the form teams to ensure all have access to appropriate materials and devices. - Incorporate statement on school’s website stating that written information is available in other formats upon request i.e. large print, coloured paper - Develop accessible safeguarding information for Learners - Include social stories and information in a pictorial form for key events and the learner handbook. 	<p>By December 2024</p>	<p>Parental information to be shared through varied forms to suit all accessibility requirements</p> <p>Email out training materials to staff for increased accessibility</p> <p>Parents and visitors will have be able to request accessible information</p>