

Accessibility Strategy

2016 - 2019

Foreword

The Legal Requirements

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of existing equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced **a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or “general duty”**; this applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies; Free Schools etc. It covers all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

The duty has three main parts. In carrying out their functions, public bodies (including educational settings) are required to have due regard to the need to:

- **eliminate discrimination** and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act,
- **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it,
- **foster good relations** across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Equality Act 2010 (c. 15), - Part 6 of the Act applies to education.

Chapter 2 applies to **Further and higher education**: the responsible body must not discriminate against or victimise a student with SEND in respect of admissions/enrolment, treatment as a student enrolled on a course or awarding of a qualification. They are required to make reasonable adjustments. This covers: (a) a course of further or higher education secured by a responsible body in England or Wales; (b) a course of education provided by the governing body of a maintained school under section 80 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in schedule 10 of the Act: Accessibility for disabled pupils.

Schedule 10 says:

An accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period—

- (a) **increasing** the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools’ **curriculum**;
- (b) **improving** the **physical environment** of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools;
- (c) **improving** the delivery to disabled pupils of **information** which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of information in (c) must be:

- (a) within a reasonable time;
- (b) in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils’ disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

Definition of Disability

A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. (Equality Act 2010).

A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments.

It is important to note that because a pupil has a disability does not necessarily mean that he/she has special educational needs.

Definition of special educational needs (SEN)

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is likely to meet the definition above when of compulsory school age (or would be likely, if no special educational provision were made). (Children and Families Act 2014)

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced changes to the way we work, with an emphasis on co-production – we must involve children, young people and their parents or carers in joint development of services as a whole and those specific services and packages that we put in place to meet an individual's needs. We have a duty to work within a multi-agency approach to: identify special educational needs or disability (SEND); assess SEND; ensure that those needs are met and that this improves outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by this legislation should lead to the development of more integrated packages of support which will enable children and young people with disabilities to access the curriculum and make the best progress possible.

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils and in particular for pupils with disabilities or SEND. Parents and carers are key partners in developing support for children and young people with disabilities or SEN. Schools must work with both parents/carers and children/young people to identify appropriate outcomes for inclusion in their personalised plans.

The Strategy

Vision

Our vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is: that with the right level of help and support, they achieve happy, healthy and fulfilling adult lives. We aim to equip them as far as possible to live independently, find a job and have an active social life – with support when they need it. We seek to ‘empower’ and ‘enable’ and will actively work to avoid developing unnecessary dependency.

This means that the schools, Academies and other education settings in Solihull will:

- have a welcoming and inclusive culture, because all staff will be committed to an inclusive agenda
- have the infrastructure required to achieve this inclusive agenda, because the strategic planning of both the LA and the school will support the continuing improvement of access to the curriculum, facilities and information
- enable success for all, because the school and LA will rigorously monitor and challenge progress and achievement
- identify needs at the earliest opportunity; assess and meet needs effectively and in a timely way; improve outcomes and life chances for all children and young people

Background

Solihull maintains 41 mainstream primary schools (junior, mixed or infant: JMI) and 20 separate infant or junior schools (of all primary schools - 9 are Academies); There are 14 mainstream secondary schools (of which 12 are Academies). A number of mainstream schools have additionally resourced provision, there are 3 in primary and 5 in secondary. In addition the local authority maintains 5 special schools, 2 all age schools for severe learning difficulties (SLD), 2 all age schools for moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and one secondary school for social, emotional or mental health needs (SEMH). There are 3 pupil referral units (PRUs) within the borough. (2015-16 data).

Over time we have comprehensively addressed our statutory duties through our Accessibility Strategy: within services and within our schools/settings/Academies. However – we acknowledge that ‘ensuring accessibility’ is an ongoing focus; staff change and schools/settings will at times encounter particular special educational needs and disabilities for the first time. There will always be a need for further action and development. We are not complacent and aim to foster a ‘learning culture’ that promotes continual improvement in all that we do.

Consultation and Involvement

In reviewing this policy the following groups were consulted or involved

- Solihull Local Authority
- Heart of England Foundation Trust Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

- Schools
- School Governors
- The Multi-Agency SEND Board

Increased access to the whole curriculum offered by schools for disabled pupils.

This will be achieved by:

- Providing on-going guidance and training to schools to support them in the effective implementation of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, Equality Act 2010 and Children and Families Act 2014 (see our [Local Offer](#))
- Collecting and disseminating examples of good practice across the Borough and the wider educational community
- Providing information to encourage continued professional development in the area of special educational need, disability and inclusion.
- Ensuring continued access to advice and support through centrally maintained specialist services and partner organisations
- Further developing schools, in particular special schools, as centres of excellence
- Working with schools to ensure that relevant information is readily available to support access on entry to/transfer between schools
- Creating a climate in which schools always think “Disability” whenever any change to curriculum and other policies are proposed
- Ensuring schools regularly review their accessibility plans

Improvements to the physical environment of schools to increase access to education and associated services

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting schools in reviewing the physical access audit of their premises and ensuring they understand the ‘anticipatory duty’.
- Ensuring that the Planning Authority monitors all building projects carried out centrally or by schools to address accessibility issues
- Providing schools with advice on disability and accessibility issues.
- Creating a climate in which schools always think “Disability” whenever any change to the physical environment is proposed

Improvements to the provision of information, for disabled pupils

This will be achieved by:

- Providing an accessible [Local Offer](#) at local authority and school level.
- Providing support and advice on the provision of information.
- Continuing to maintain specialist support services
- Creating a climate in which schools always think “Disability” whenever provision of information is planned

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- Providing an independent and impartial Information, Advice and Support service for children and young people with SEND and for their parents/carers

Co-ordination

This strategy will be led by the Assistant Director (Learning, Skills and Progression) through a strategic group (SEND Board) which will include members from:

- SEND service managers (multi-agency)
- School Asset Support Team
- Health colleagues (commissioners and practitioner leads)
- Parents/carers
- Children and young people ('experts by experience')

This strategy will link into: -

- Asset Management Plans (AMP)
- Schools' & Service's Development and Accessibility Plans
- Early Years Plan
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Council Strategic Plans

Accessibility of this strategy

This strategy will be made available to all schools and other interested groups and to the public in as accessible form as possible.

Duration, Review and Revision

Systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the individual elements of the strategy and are identified in the plan section for each element. The overall monitoring of the plan will be by an annual report to the SEND Board. This version was reviewed in June 2016 and will be reviewed after three years.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The Authority recognises the need to monitor, evaluate and review the processes within the Authority and schools to ensure that accessibility is increased and the best use is made of all of the resources. The School Asset Support Team, drawing on information provided by schools, Academies, settings, support organisations and health colleagues will carry out implementation, review and evaluation of the strategy.

Training and Support

The Specialist Inclusion Support Service and other local authority staff will continue to provide training and advice on issues related to special educational needs and disabilities. This will include the dissemination and sharing of good practice.

Action Plan for Accessibility Strategy 2016 -2019

Desired Outcome	Actions	Person(s) responsible	Timescale	Monitoring Process	Success Criteria
Review and update the local authority's Accessibility Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update sections of the policy Update action plan 	Head of Service, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	By June 2016	SEND Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy published; known to all stakeholders Statutory Duty fulfilled
Overview of schools' accessibility updated	Audit schools' accessibility – building and curriculum – update and refresh; check schools' local offer; conduct schools survey	Head of Service Education Improvement	Sep 2017	Adviser visits focus; reported to SEND Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All providers are compliant with the duty; equipped with knowledge and expectations Schools' local offers are compliant
Capital spend reflects accessibility needs	Review Capital Plan for impact on schools' Accessibility Duty	Head Of Service Asset Support Team	Dec 2017	SEND Board	Schools' fulfil anticipatory duty in relation to individual pupils
No disabled child or young person with a SEN enters a school or setting without appropriate support in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback survey checks that schools are compliant 	SISS	Annual survey reported	SEND Board	Early planning for transition/transfer into settings
Improve the ability of teachers to deal with a range of special educational needs and disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism Education Trust programme for all schools/settings Dyslexia friendly programme for all schools/settings Inclusion Development Programme for a range of SEN 	SISS; special schools	On going	Course attendance; School Development Plans: report to SEND Board	Teachers confident to manage a range of special educational needs and disabilities; pupil progress and achievement improves
Information normally produced in written form is provided in an accessible form	Series of workshop sessions to inform and assist schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission Special Educational Need and Disability Information Advice and Support Service for children and young people and their parents/carers 	SISS Manager Strategic Commissioner – Children, Young People and Families	On going	Local Offer monitoring; SEND Board	Accessible information available Customer satisfaction improves