



Doncaster Council Accessibility Strategy for Schools 2015-2018

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1. Key principles

In Doncaster we want all our children and young people to receive the best education possible recognising that every child is unique with their own particular strengths, interests and needs. The Council's vision for Learning and Achievement is 'All education Good or better, No one left behind'. The values and principles underpinning this strategy are strongly aligned to this vision.

Improving access to quality education for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is essential to ensure preparation for adulthood and enhanced life chances through:

- equality of opportunity;
- progression in learning and achievement;
- positive relationships and meaningful participation in society;
- good physical and emotional health; and, for most young people,
- access to employment and training opportunities and/or independent living.

We need to ensure that there is a range of high quality support services and provision to support removing the barriers to achievement for all Doncaster's children and young people. This is particularly important for those vulnerable and in need, including children and young people with SEND.

The overall aim of this strategy is for Doncaster Council to support its schools in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, raising their attainment and achievement and working towards their individual aspirations.

2. Legislative framework

The Equality Act 2010 replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and brought together a range of equality duties and requirements under one piece of legislation. The Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply.

The Equality Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the '**general duty**') that applies to public bodies, **including maintained schools and academies and Free Schools**) and which extends to 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.

In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to the three main elements:

- 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.

The three key duties under the Equality Act in relation to education provision are:

- 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 publish and implement accessibility strategy to increase access to school education for disabled pupils.

The Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to prepare an accessibility strategy for the maintained schools in their area: schools **for which they are responsible**.

Under the Children and Families Act, the Local Authority must publish a Local Offer which must include information about its accessibility strategy (under paragraph 1 Schedule 10 to the Equality Act 2010). The Local Offer can be found at: <http://www.doncasterchildrenandfamilies.info/thelocaloffer.html> and feedback is welcomed on the content and organisation of this published information.

This 2015-2018 accessibility strategy applies to Doncaster Local Authority maintained schools, nurseries, children's centres and early years settings.

This Accessibility Strategy does not apply to academies, Free Schools or private nursery providers on school sites. However, we will endeavour to work closely with all providers and expect them to have an awareness of our strategies. Owners / governing bodies of these provisions must produce their own accessibility strategy in accordance with the Equality Act.

In the Children and Families Act 2014, a child becomes a young person after the end of compulsory education i.e. the last Friday in June of Year 11.

The SEND Strategic Board has an overview of the implementation of the SEND Reforms.

3. Definition of disability

Under the Equality Act 2010 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. The definition can include a wide range of physical or mental impairments including learning difficulties; sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing; mental health conditions; medical conditions; and hidden impairments such as autism and speech, language and communication impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and people diagnosed with cancer, HIV infection or multiple sclerosis.

The test of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activity is whether it affects one or more of the following:

- mobility;
- manual dexterity;
- physical co-ordination;
- continence;
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand;
- perception of risk of physical danger.

A child's ability to memorise, concentrate, learn, speak, move, make and maintain positive relationships is central to their education. An impairment that has a long-term and substantial effect on a child's ability to do these things may amount to a disability.

Some disabled children also have special educational needs (SEN) and may be receiving support via school-based SEN provision or have a Statement of SEN or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan). However, some disabled children will not have SEN, and some disabled children with SEN will still need reasonable adjustments to be made for them in addition to any support they receive through the SEN framework.

4. Duty on the Local Authority

Schedule 10 of the Act: *Accessibility for disabled pupils*, 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' curriculums;

(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:

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

Schools and LAs are required to plan for:

- increasing access for disabled pupils to the school curriculum. This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as

participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits.

- improving access to the physical environment of schools. This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education.
- improving the delivery of written information to disabled children and young people. This will include planning to make written information that is normally provided by the school to all children also available to disabled children. Examples might include hand outs, timetables, textbooks and information about school events. The information should take account of individual disabilities and preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame.

The Local Authority will seek to ensure that schools within its responsibility do not disadvantage or discriminate against a disabled child or young person because of something that is a consequence of their disability. In planning new schools and extensions of and adaptations to existing schools, the Local Authority will also seek to incorporate best practice to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

5. Duty on schools

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty build on previous legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act and require schools to produce an accessibility plan.

The responsible body has had a duty to produce an accessibility plan since September 2002. These initial plans should have been in place by April 2003. The DfE's Guidance for schools makes it clear that schools continue to have a duty to produce an accessibility plan, have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing their plan and during the period to which the plan relates, the responsible body must keep its accessibility plan under review and, if necessary, revise it. It is the duty of the responsible body to implement its accessibility plan.

Doncaster Local Authority has provided all schools with model guidance. This accessibility strategy also seeks to protect children and young people against indirect discrimination; a school must not do something which applies to all children and young people but which is more likely to have an adverse effect on disabled children and young people only.

The Statutory Policies for Schools (Sept 2014) states that it is a requirement that maintained schools, academies, free schools, independent schools, sixth-form colleges, further education colleges and Pupil Referral Units must review their accessibility plan every three years. It also states that approval should be by the governing body however, they are free to delegate the approval right to a committee of the governing body, an individual governor or the head teacher.

An accessibility plan must be in writing and is a plan for, over a prescribed period:

- increasing the extent to which disabled children / young people can participate in the school's curriculum
- improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled children / young people are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by the school
- improving the delivery to disabled children / young people;
 - (i) within a reasonable time, and
 - (ii) in ways which are determined after taking account of their disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents, of information which is provided in writing for children / young people who are not disabled.

Schools' Access Plans should also consider access to after-school activities and Extended School activities if they are based on their school site.

Planning should start with the information that is already held by the school regarding the nature of the school population and the school's strengths and weaknesses in ensuring access for disabled children and young people.

The Ofsted framework strengthens the requirements relating to equality of access and narrowing the gap in achievement. When judging the 'Effectiveness of leadership and management', inspectors will consider a number of criteria as outlined in the Ofsted School inspection handbook, including the effectiveness of governors in discharging their core statutory functions. A school's accessibility plan may form part of the evidence when formulating this judgement.

The Ofsted School inspection handbook states that inspectors may also engage in:

- short visits to a number of lessons, spending a few minutes in each
- short observations of small group teaching
- observing learning in lessons, during which they may observe activities, talk with pupils about their work and scrutinise pupils' work
- joining a class or specific group of pupils as they go from lesson to lesson, to assess their experience of a school day or part of a school day.

In this way, the experience, progress and learning of these pupils can be judged within the context of other pupils' experience, such as their access to the curriculum

Governors should report annually on the impact of their school's arrangements for children with SEN and other vulnerabilities and progress made implementing the accessibility plan.

6. Reasonable adjustments

From September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for **Local Authorities and schools** included a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled children subject to the Reasonable Adjustment duty. The Equality Act does not set out what would be a reasonable adjustment or a list of factors to consider in determining what is reasonable.

In the Equality Duty 2011, the duty to make reasonable adjustments applies only to disabled people. For schools, this duty is summarised as follows and this accessibility strategy recognises and promotes these principles:

Where something a school does places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

Schools are not subject to the other reasonable adjustment duty to make alterations to physical features because this is already considered as part of their planning duties.

The reasonable adjustments duty is triggered only where there is a need to avoid 'substantial disadvantage'. Whether or not a disabled child or young person is at a substantial disadvantage or not will depend on the individual situation.

In addition to having a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for particular individual disabled children and young people, schools will also have to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled children and young people generally as it is likely that any school will admit a disabled child at some point.

Schools have this anticipatory duty and should not, therefore, wait until a disabled child or young person arrives before making or planning to make reasonable adjustments. This may be too late and could lead to an individual being substantially disadvantaged.

Schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability but it is important for schools to plan a broad range of accessibility improvements over time. Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and will often involve a change in practice rather than the provision of expensive pieces of equipment or additional staff. Schools should, for example, be prepared to produce large font papers for children and young people with a visual impairment in advance of admission. Many other reasonable adjustments that schools are already making for disabled children and young people include the use of some auxiliary aids, such as coloured layovers for dyslexic pupils, pen grips, adapted PE equipment, adapted keyboards and computer software.

It will be for schools to consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of each case. However, factors a school may consider when assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment relevant to its own context may include the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other children and young people, health and safety requirements and whether aids should be made available from other agencies.

What would be a reasonable "adjustment" is often a matter of judgement and, wherever possible, should be decided by agreement between the Local Authority, the school and parents/carers e.g. the right of a child/ young person to attend a school of their choice needs to be balanced with the responsibility of the Council to make the most efficient use of its resources.

7. Access to the curriculum

The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 should lead to the development of more integrated packages of support which will support children and young people with disabilities in accessing the curriculum.

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all children and young people and in particular those with special educational needs and disabilities. The graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice 2015, should make the curriculum increasingly and consistently more accessible to all children and young people.

Quality First Teaching, entitlement to a broad and balanced and suitably differentiated curriculum and participation in the life of the school are key factors in meeting the needs of all children and young people and particularly for those with SEND.

8. Improving the physical environment

The Local Authority will work with schools to improve the physical environments of schools and other educational providers to maximise access to buildings and to facilities within them. The LA has fully complied with building regulations and taken full heed of Department for Education (DfE) guidance provided through building bulletins and this will continue. DfE guidance provides advice on building, extending and adapting schools to meet the specific needs of children and young people with SEND. In particular, in designing and supporting learning environments, the LA will continue to be mindful of aspects of children's cognition and learning, behavioural, emotional and social development, communication and interaction issues and sensory and physical impairments and disabilities. This may include calm learning areas and 'break out or withdrawal spaces as well as facilities to meet specific needs.

In preparing funding bids, allocating available funding and in seeking Section 106 developer contributions the LA will be mindful of the need to take account of the needs of children with SEND. The LA will also be clear where responsibility lies, between the LA and schools, for funding and conducting the works.

All schools have an anticipatory duty and are likely to be responsible for one or more children with SEND. The LA will encourage and support improved physical access to the curriculum through reasonable adjustments. Adaptations will vary and will need to be individualised to meet the particular difficulties of each child or young person. The aim will be to ensure that all children, including those with SEND, have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

Children with autism can often have difficulty interpreting their surroundings and communicating and interacting with others. They need access to calm, distraction free learning environment, which is predictable and easily understood, as the reduction in sensory stimulus helps to reduce anxiety and distress, (this will not always be possible for all lessons, but a quiet place could be made available as needed).

Environmental adaptations may include provision of an accessible, alternative teaching and learning space within the school to which children and young people can be withdrawn, or can withdraw themselves, should the classroom environment become overwhelming or present sensory challenges. Support services from health and education can also advise on adaptations to the inside and outside environment for individuals to help include children and young people with sensory needs.

Children and young people who are experiencing social emotional or/and mental health needs (presenting as withdrawn or isolated at one end of the continuum to disruptive and challenging at the other end of the continuum) may need extra space to ensure a safe, comfortable distance between themselves and peers. They may need a more secluded place to settle and stabilise their emotions.

Specialist health services can also support and advise schools on a range of strategies that enhance the inclusion of disabled children and young people. For example:

- Occupational Therapists can advise a school about using activity based therapies to help raise an individual's self-esteem and encourage them to be as independent as possible. They can also advise on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the school environment if required
- Physiotherapists can advise a school about an individual's mobility and physical development. This might include things like co-ordination and ability to sit, stand and walk. They can advise a school on how best to help the child physically to keep the child as mobile as possible and on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the environment

Some children and young people with a hearing impairment may also benefit from British Sign Language (BSL) signage being displayed visually around school.

9. Improving the delivery of information to disabled children and young people who require support accessing written information

The Local Authority's Services for Children with a Hearing Impairment (HI) and for Children with a Visual Impairment (VI) and the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) are able to make information available through alternative methods and formats.

The developing and widening use of ICT is significantly transforming the lives of everybody but especially those children and young people who are unable to

communicate using traditional methods. We liaise with partners in schools and health professionals, e.g. the Doncaster Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England, to ensure there is a consistent and equitable method of securing expensive technological aids, including Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Aids. Access to information for children and young people with severe sensory impairments could be via electronic media; internet/websites.

Visual impairment

Written material should be produced in a minimum of 12 point and printed in a plain font. However, for some visually impaired children and young people, this may not be sufficient. The VI Team can give advice and support about producing accessible versions.

Large print format was originally developed for people with learning disabilities, but now has a wider user group. It uses large print with illustrations and can be supported by audio. The language is reduced in complexity and jargon.

The VI Team will work in partnership with schools and other agencies to provide access, for children with specific impairments or disabilities, to a range of paper and electronic sources of information, including Braille facilities, signage, talking/text reading facilities.

Hearing impairment

The HI Team will work in partnership with schools and other agencies including Adult Social Care to provide access for children with specific impairments or disabilities including the provision of specialist access equipment for children and young people with severe communication difficulties and members of the Deaf community. This may include:

- specialist assistive listening devices such as radio aids and Sound Field Systems, text phones, and video telephone systems.
- certain information in video format requiring both subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL) sign interpreting services as well as live voice.
- certain information access requiring the provision of BSL interpreting services across a number of levels for a range of information contact points.

The HI Service checks and tests all assistive listening devices every half term to ensure that all equipment is working optimally for each child and young person.

There are a small number of children who will have both sensory impairments and English as an additional language. This group will require additional and specialist facilitates and services which reflect a combination of the above strategies.

Other learning difficulties and disabilities

For some children with learning difficulties and/or autism, the presentation of school related information and learning materials in a coherent visual format to support

comprehension and retention of information can also help. For example, colour coding the doors of subject teaching rooms in line with exercise books and timetables.

Access to information for disabled children when English is not their first language may need to be translations into their preferred format.

10. Specialist provision

Doncaster has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. Specialist teams provide advice and support at whole-school, group and individual levels. In addition to the five Doncaster special schools' provision, two mainstream schools have attached SEND resourced facilities, one primary and one secondary, for children with a hearing impairment.

A range of outreach services from special schools provides additional support to school settings.

11. Information, advice and guidance

Doncaster's SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SAIDSEND- previously the Parent Partnership Service) and the Doncaster Parent Voice forum work collaboratively in supporting the LA to engage with parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities to inform and develop good practice within settings.

Good practice will be shared through the Doncaster SENCo Network and meetings with school leadership teams and governors. The SENCo termly Network meetings and other targeted training provide on-going workforce development and shared understanding of the changes and challenges as well promoting good practice in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

12. School Admissions

Our aim is for children and young people with SEND who are starting school to have a place in a suitably accessible, nearby, primary school which feeds into an accessible secondary school as a pathway for their education.

It is against the law to discriminate in school admissions, education and associated services and exclusions.

The admission limit of each school includes the number of children and young people with a statement or statutory EHCP. A Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP must name the school the child attends, and the procedures followed to amend the Statement or EHCP to name a new school are those that are specified in the SEND Code of Practice. We are required to try, wherever possible, to place children in accordance with parental preference if the school requested by parents can meet the child's needs and the request does not compromise the

efficient use of resources or the efficient education of other children. In Doncaster, a wide range of educational provision is available for children with identified barriers to learning. The requirements of the SEND Code of Practice are implemented and these ensure that children with Statements of Special Educational Needs or EHCP are not disadvantaged in their choice of school at any age.

These children are usually allocated places at phase transfer, such as Y6 to Y7 primary to secondary education, before the mainstream application process is completed. The Statutory Review of a child's Statement of Special Educational Needs or EHCP, is held in the early autumn term of:

- the year prior to their admission to school (during nursery),
- National Curriculum Year 2 (aged 6–7 years) for those children who attend infant schools
- National Curriculum Year 6 (aged 10–11 years). It is also good practice for statutory reviews of children in Year 5 to begin discussions around future secondary provision and placement.

This will provide parents/carers with sufficient time to make any necessary enquiries before they have to make a decision on which school/s to request.

The Local Authority has published a Transfer Plan for transfers from a Statement of SEN to an EHCP and this can be found on the Local Offer site under Updates for Parents and Practitioners.

We will keep our admissions policy under review and amend this as appropriate to ensure on-going compliance with the Act.

13. Monitoring and Review

A Local Authority must keep its accessibility strategy under review during the period to which it relates and, if necessary, revise it.

This Strategy will be regularly reviewed by the contributors and revised/updated as necessary within that period as required by the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 10.

We will review the effectiveness of this strategy using a variety of means including:

- monitoring the number of schools that meet the minimum standards for accessibility;
- monitoring the admissions to Doncaster Council maintained schools.
- feedback from Head teachers/Governors;
- feedback from children and young people;
- feedback from parents/ carers

14. Consultation responses and comments

The Draft strategy was subject to consultation to ensure that it is published after taking into account feedback from parents and carers, schools and other partners.

Consultation Feedback was closed on 20th January 2016.

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15. Local Authority Service contact details

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