

Bracknell Forest Council

Schools Accessibility Strategy: 2017 – 2020

1. Overview

1.1 The Council is required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an accessibility strategy in which it promotes better access for disabled pupils at school.

1.2 The Council has published this strategy following consultation with key stakeholders, including schools, parents, children and young people and Council services. Consultation included representation from disabled people.

1.3 All schools should have regard to this draft Accessibility Strategy and use it to inform their Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan that shows how, over time, access to education for disabled pupils will be improved.

1.4 Schools must publish their Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan with links to their SEN Information report that are available on the Local Offer.

1.5 This strategy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Children, Young People & Learning Asset Management Plan and the Council's Children, Young People & Learning Education Estates strategy.

2. Introduction

2.1 In Bracknell Forest, we are ambitious for all children and young people and this is recognised in the Council Plan, the Learning and Achievement Strategy and our joint Special Educational Needs and Disability Partnership Strategy "Thrive in learning and not be 'left behind'".

2.2 Improving access to inclusive education ensures that children and young people get a good start in life and everyone is equipped and empowered to use their own particular talents to lead independent lives.

2.3 This accessibility strategy sets out the approach that Bracknell Forest Council is taking to increase access to education for disabled children and young people, so that they can benefit from educational provision to the same extent that children without disabilities can.

2.4 The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by introducing new duties on local authorities (LA) and schools in relation to disabled pupils and prospective pupils. From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA 2.5 continues to apply. The LA is required to have an accessibility strategy under the planning duty in the Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Section 88 (Schedule 10):

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/10>

2.6 This strategy applies only to schools: the Equality Act requires ALL providers to make reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantaging pupils with disabilities, but schools have an additional duty to plan for better access for disabled pupils, as detailed below.

2.7 The reasonable adjustments duty and a wider and more strategic planning approach for schools are intended to complement each other.

These planning duties therefore do NOT apply to Further Education, Higher Education or Early Years settings (unless constituted as a school). For them, the requirement to remove physical barriers is contained within the reasonable adjustments duty.

3. The General Duty

3.1 This duty requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled pupils that is related to their disability;
- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
- Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating people more favourably than other people.

3.2 The General Duty applies across schools' duties, and applies to disabled pupils, staff and parents/ carers, along with other users of the school.

3.3 The Specific Duty

3.4 In addition to the General Duty, there is a Specific Duty for schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the General Duty. The main requirement is for schools to prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, involving disabled people in the development of this scheme, and to implement the scheme and report on it. In effect, the General Duty sets out what schools do, with the Specific Duty setting out how schools have to do it and what they need to record as evidence of what they have done.

3.5 Reasonable Adjustment Duty

The Equality Act requires schools and LAs to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage and enable pupils to participate in education and associated services.

3.6 When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress

3.7 Duties on schools

3.8 The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will improve the access to education for disabled pupils over time. The school's Accessibility Plan should be published on the school website, and hard copies provided upon request. There should be a link between the school's SEN information and the Accessibility Plan.

4. Local context

4.1 In Bracknell Forest our Learning Improvement Strategy sets out the determination to make Bracknell Forest a great place to be a child and maximise learning for all children and young people. We want the best start in life for all children and believe that this will be achieved through inspirational leadership and high quality school places. We want children to be proud to succeed and to experience an education that meets their individual needs. We know that this will ensure that children thrive in their learning and no-one is left behind.

4.2 Taking into account significant changes in the national policy, there is now a focus on collaborative working between schools, partner agencies and the LA through such developments as the Children and Family Act 2014.

4.3 Identification and removing barriers to access and participation must take into account new ways of working and new approaches to curriculum delivery in an around partnerships of schools, both mainstream and special.

4.4 Early identification and response to issues arising is paramount, and it is the function of this document to provide an overview of the provision that will ensure our inclusive strategy is championed throughout our services for children and young people.

5. School context

5.1 Bracknell Forest is the second smallest local authority with 39 schools which includes a Special School and a Pupil Referral Unit. There are 3 infant and junior schools, 25 primary and 6 secondary schools. Of the 39 schools there are currently 3 converter and 2 sponsored academies.

5.2 As of June 2017, there are 683 children or young people from Bracknell Forest with a statement or EHCP.

- 240 children attend primary phase school
- 301 young people of secondary age (years 7 – 11)
- 142 young people are 16 or older and educated at school or FE college

5.3 The majority of children and young people in Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) who have a Statement of Special Educational Need (SEN) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan attend a mainstream school.

5.4 The percentage of school aged children with SEN support is increasing (11.0% in 2016 to 11.4% in 2017),

5.5 Every local area is required to have Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). Our JSNA can be found [here](#).

6. The key features of the accessibility strategy:

- A. Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum.
- B. Improving the physical environment of 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 schools.
- C. Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

A: Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum

6.1 Ensuring access to the curriculum is vital in providing equal opportunities to children and young people with SEND. Schools need to consider how to improve the accessibility of the curriculum, covering teaching and learning, trips and visits, after school activities and extended school activities.

6.2 Schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and play a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for all pupils. Therefore schools are required to have in plan an 'Accessibility Plan' that demonstrates what actions the school is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with SEND.

6.3 All schools must "use their best endeavours" to provide "high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised" and which should "meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people." (SEN Code of Practice 1.24).

6.4 Support for schools

6.5 The Council and its partners provide a range of services to support schools in making inclusive and accessible provision. Details are available in the Local Offer [here](#).

Services offered to schools by the Council include:

- The sensory needs consortium is commissioned by a number of authorities and is managed by a neighbouring authority.
- The Educational Psychology and SEN Service consists of specialists in the areas of:
 - Educational Psychologist (including non-statutory work available for purchase by schools) and
 - SEN case officers.
- Standards and effectiveness service

- Virtual School for CLA.
 - EAL
 - Traveller education support
 - Transition support
 - Learning and behaviour coordinators
- Targeted Services consist of specialists in
 - Behaviour support
 - Educational Welfare
 - Safeguarding and Inclusion
 - Pupil referral Unit
 - Support for Learning (SPLD support)
 - ASC support

6.6 Specialist provision is also available through:

1. Resourced provision in mainstream schools for:

- Autism Spectrum Condition (The Rise) (Meadow Vale School Rainbow Resource Centre.)
- Behaviour (College Hall)
- Speech and Language (Meadow Vale School)

2. Kennell Lane Special school.

6.7 In some circumstances, NHS services also support access to the curriculum for individual pupils, including Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy (e.g. specialist seating assessment), Physiotherapy and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

6.8 Services are also available which are not directly Council managed – schools are able to use their SEN budget to purchase as required. Advice on sources of learning support is available on the Local Offer.

B: Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided.

6.9 Reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure equal access to the environment, including the creation of safe spaces, calming areas, and individual workstations. Support services from health, social care and education services are available to advise educational settings about suitable and reasonable adaptations to the inside and outside environment to help include pupils with SEND.

6.10 Physical access

The Council has a planning duty to improve the physical accessibility of school buildings over time. The Council strategy has been

- i) Improvement of physical access for known pupils in the system and
- ii) Investment to create a spread of accessible schools.

6.11 The Council's capital strategy for the school estate is published annually as part of the Cabinet agenda at the beginning of each year. One of the aims of the schools capital programme is to improve the standard of physical accessibility alongside planned capital investment.

6.12 Access Audits are undertaken for all establishments by consultants and are updated in response to any changes in disability legislation or guidance.

6.13 The Council has a policy of supporting the educational inclusion of pupils with special needs, including physical disabilities, into mainstream education wherever possible and practical.

6.14 The highest priorities under Access are for those works required in respect of individual pupils, service users, staff or building users who are registered disabled or with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) for physical access. After this, works are implemented in priority order from the surveys.

6.15 The Council has maintained a rolling programme of access improvements to school buildings, being managed by CYPL, and for non-school establishments managed by the Resources department.

6.16 Enquiries or clarification on issues relating to the physical accessibility of school buildings should be directed to the Head of Education Capital & Property (Chris.Taylor@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

6.17 Where a school undertakes a new build, extension or refurbishment, it is expected that the school will incorporate any access facilities needed for existing pupils, as well as, in accordance with its statutory responsibilities, anticipate the needs of future pupils (e.g. level access, height adjustable work stations).

6.18 Councils receive no dedicated access funding for adaptation, improvement or alteration at any schools. Therefore central funding for accessibility improvements related to pupils joining or transferring to an individual school will need to be considered by the Council as these priorities arise. There is a requirement on schools to notify the Council¹ of access needs, and parents need to identify on school admission forms that their child has physical access requirements.

6.19 There will be a presumption against agreeing a school place until discussions (or formal consultation if an Education Health Care Plan is in place) have taken place with that establishment about its capacity to accommodate the needs of the relevant pupil. The school and Council will use 'best endeavours' to enable placement according to parental preference.

¹ These should be directed to the Head of Education Capital & Property, Strategy, Resources & Early Help (Chris.Taylor@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

6.20 Where complex adaptations are required, planning must begin at least 12 months ahead of transition. Schools need to give adequate notice, obtain landlord consent, and obtain agreement for any central funding, before incurring any costs.

6.21 Consideration should be given to whether adaptations at the school provide the best value for money as well as meeting the pupils' needs. There may be another school that is already accessible and can better suit the needs of the child. A cost analysis of potential transportation of the child for the duration of their term in school should be made in comparison to the cost of undertaking the required adaptations at the school.

6.22 Examples of school funded schemes include but are not restricted to:

- level access to the main entrance and public/pupil areas of the site
- allocated accessible parking (and ongoing enforcement)
- ongoing improvements to signage and the sensory environment (appropriate contrasting colour schemes, floor coverings, curtains, blinds, lighting etc.), highlighting of steps and changes of level.

6.23 For more complex and costly works there will need to be a meeting on site with all parties present e.g. Head of Education Capital & Property and the relevant Project Manager.

6.24 Once the LA has funded an adaptation, its upkeep and maintenance is then the school's responsibility. If a pupil moves and the school no longer needs a particular facility (e.g. a hygiene or physiotherapy room) the Governing Body must consult the Council about any change; if subsequently the facility is needed again, this re-instatement will then be the financial responsibility of the Governing Body.

6.25 Adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools:

6.26 Most, but not all adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools are funded from the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) which provides funding at 90% of the cost; the final 10% falls to the Governing Body of the school, trustees or to the relevant Church Authority.

6.27 Adaptations in Academies:

6.28 Academy Schools are independent of the Council and are funded directly by Central Government.

6.29 Advice from EFA is that Councils should discuss the placement of a pupil with additional needs with an Academy prior to the issue of an Education Health and Care Plan and that the issue of costs and funding should form part of that discussion. The Academy may decline a placement where it cannot afford to make the necessary adaptations.

C: Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

6.30 This covers planning to make information (normally provided by the school to its pupils) accessible to disabled pupils. This should take account of pupils' disabilities, pupils' and parents' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame. There is a range of support services from health, social care and education to advise educational settings about suitability and reasonable adaptations.

6.31 This advice and guidance includes the following topics:

- Issues of physical space and how to reduce distractions.
- Opportunities to present information visually.
- Providing organisational strategies to complete activities.
- Using visual structures to help with organisation, increase clarity and provide instruction.

7. Communication and Interaction

7.1 Available Council resources:

- Carrying out specialist assessments and monitoring children's progress.
- Provide on-going advice on how to meet the needs of individual children.
- Provide specialist services to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils attending a mainstream school.

7.2 Expectations of schools:

- Support pupils' understanding of the spoken word by using visual clues, gestures, illustrations, diagrams and the written word.
- Modify adult language in terms of complexity, vocabulary, utterance and speed.
- Repeat instructions and modify the instruction if required.
- Teach strategies to pupils that support self-learning and self-help.
- Identify key vocabulary of the curriculum and teach definitions and cueing sentences.
- Support the organisation of language through visual imagery.
- Provide written information in a straightforward style.
- Ensure that details of homework are given in sufficient time to allow for understanding.
- Support the development of conversational skills and other aspects of social communication.

7.3 There are specific responsibilities and support available for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition; these can be found here www.autism.org.uk/

8. Learning and development

8.1 Available Council resources:

- Assess, monitor and support progress of children identified as having high needs.
- Provide specialist services to support schools in meeting the needs of pupils attending a mainstream school.

8.2 Expectations of schools:

- When addressing communication needs, avoid asking pupils to read in public unless they are comfortable to do so, instead find an area of strength for them to demonstrate publicly.
- Use a multi-sensory approach during lessons to maximise learning channels.
- Carefully consider presentation of work sheets.
- Provide pupils photocopies of key text to allow for highlighting.
- Regularly place the child in a group where they can contribute knowledge.
- Ensure the work/materials suit the child's mental age, as well as reading age.
- Ensure adequate reinforcement/consolidation of reading and writing skills to the level of automaticity.
- Use colour and visual clues to support reinforcement.
- Help the pupil organise themselves by developing visual timetable, prompts and structures to support their memory and routines.
- Use alternative methods for recording content, specifically methods that support revision.
- Use positive feedback when marking work, and focus on marking content rather than accuracy, neatness or quantity.

9. Sensory/physical

9.1 Available Council resources:

- Facilitate multi-agency work including health and social care professionals and school staff.
- Provide specialist equipment to support learning.

9.2 Expectations of schools:

- Ensure that all pupil coat pegs, drawers and furniture are at appropriate heights.
- Sinks, taps and play equipment to be at a suitable height and suitable for pupils with poor motor skills.
- Playground markings to promote appropriate motor planning games and route planning.
- Handrails to be placed adjacent to steps.
- Adjustable height furniture in science and technology rooms.

- Alternative means of access determined to avoid difficult steps.
- Doorways to be wheelchair accessible.
- Fire doors to be suitable for accessible for physically impaired pupils.
- Liaise with health authority staff when considering the height of any toilet seats and equipment that may be required.
- Ensure that any adaptations to toilet areas allow space for a changing bench and suitable storage areas.
- All uneven surfaces on the premises to be monitored and repaired.
- Any obstacles, steps of uneven surfaces that cannot be removed to be clearly marked.
- The tread and riser of steps to be clearly marked with a contrasting colour.

10. Vision and Hearing

10.1 The sensory needs consortium offers specialist advice, training and support to schools to ensure that information is accessible for children and young people with a sensory impairment. An important facet of this is functional visual and hearing assessments in a variety of settings which determine support levels. The service provides specialist advice for the Education Health Care Needs Assessment process. The service advises on the modification of materials into appropriate formats in order to enable full visual and linguistic access. The service advises on access arrangements for formal examinations to ensure that children and young people with sensory loss have equal opportunities academically.

10.2 The HI team offers support and advice on acoustic measures for inclusion in schools and the use of technology such as FM systems, hearing aids and cochlear implants. The Teachers of the Deaf can also increase the accessibility of information and the curriculum through careful assessment, linguistic differentiation, curricular support, training delivery and direct teaching.

10.3 The VI team work closely with Ophthalmology and where a child or young person needs fast tracking for an eye appointment relating to a significant concern or a sudden and deteriorating loss, they link closely with the local hospital in order to ensure that the child's vision is assessed promptly by a consultant.

11. Evaluation and Review

11.1 This Strategy covers the period 2017-2020 and will be regularly reviewed by the contributors and revised/updated as required with this time period.

11.2 The overall responsibility for the evaluation and review rests with the Principal Psychologist and head of SEND.

11.3 School improvement visits will include a question regarding the school's accessibility policy and their implementation of the Equality Act 2010.

11.4 This strategy will be published on the Bracknell Forest Local Offer.

12. References:

The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

SEN Code of Practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Children, Young People & Learning Asset Management Plan 2013-16

<http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/asset-management-plan-2013-to-2016.pdf>

Children Young People & Learning EDUCATION ESTATES STRATEGY 2012 -2015

<http://democratic.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/documents/s55938/120904%20Barnard%20-%20Education%20Estates%20Strategy%20v12.pdf>