

North Somerset Accessibility Strategy 2016-19 (Accessibility for Disabled Pupils)

1. Introduction

The overall **aim** of this strategy is to ensure that North Somerset supports schools in meeting the needs of disabled pupils and enabling them to achieve aspirational outcomes.

The **purpose** of this strategy is to make clear the local authority's position on improving accessibility for disabled pupils and to outline schools' responsibilities in meeting their requirements around accessibility including accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information for disabled pupils.

2. Vision

The North Somerset Corporate Plan identifies three key outcomes to be achieved for local people, including those with disabilities; prosperity and opportunity, health and wellbeing and quality places.

For our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) we want them to access all the education, employment, training and social opportunities that they need to enhance their life chances, prepare them for adulthood and enable them to contribute to their community.

3. Local Context

North Somerset has a range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The Local Authority's partnership with schools is well-established and the Vulnerable Learners' Service provide advice and support at whole school, group and individual levels. In addition to our 3 special schools, two schools have resourced provision to meet the needs of children with speech and language needs and hearing impairment.

All early years settings in North Somerset have access to guidance and advice from North Somerset Area SENCOs through The Early Years Team. North Somerset Area SENCOs provide advice and practical support to early years settings about identifying and assessing special educational needs as well as providing day-to-day support for Inclusion Coordinators (INCCOs) in ensuring arrangements are in place to support children with SEN. The Area SENCOs also develop and disseminating good practice and where necessary keeping parents informed of local support services that are available to parents with SEN. Early years settings are given advice about North Somerset processes that support children with SEND such as Early Years Top Up funding and the Inclusion LINK programme through the AREA SENCOs. Various SEN resources, information about inclusion support and Early Years SEN top up funding can be accessed on the website: www.n-somerset.gov.uk/fis

The Local Authority (LA) SENCo Network provides an on-going training and development partnership enhancing provision and support for SEND pupils.

The SEND Program Board meets every 6 weeks and aims to ensure effective implementation of SEND reforms resulting from the Children's Act (2014).

4. Definition

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. A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions or hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act, 2010)

5. Legal Context

The [Equality Act 2010](#) and [The Special educational needs and disability \(SEND\) code of practice: 0 – 25 years 2015](#) provide the legal framework for this strategy.

The Equality Act 2010

Schedule 10 of the Act specifies the requirement for the preparation of an accessibility strategy by the local authority which must demonstrate:

1. Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums;
2. 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;
3. Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The Equality Act created the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It comprises two separate duties which apply to both local authorities and schools. This includes maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools)

The General Duty

This duty requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have due 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 disabled people more favourably than other people.

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

The Specific Duty

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.

Schools and the local authority must be aware of the wider Equality Act 2010 requirements in Part 3 of the Act relating to the provision of services, goods and facilities. This may affect a range of activities whether they involve the use of school premises by community groups or the local authority when delivering its education service and support to schools.

Importantly, the Act encourages the use of reasonable adjustments in order to achieve equality of access for disabled people where no such duty applies to an able person. This applies to both schools and local authorities in exercising their duty to advance equality.

6. Access to the Curriculum

Ensuring access to the curriculum is crucial in developing life opportunities, preparing for adulthood and enabling contribution to the community. All children and young people should have access to high quality teaching that focuses on inclusive practice and breaks down barriers to learning.

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

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. This, in partnership with the graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25, focuses on making the curriculum more accessible to all children and young people.

The Local Authority supports the principles of personalisation and person-centred planning and works with providers to ensure their work with children and young people with SEND reflects these. The Local Authority supports schools to respond to individual needs of pupils

and training needs of staff with a range of specialist services, commissioned services and part traded services. Guidance on supporting pupils with medical needs is available in a separate document and can be found here <http://www.nsesp.org/Article/16092>

North Somerset's Special Educational Needs and Disability information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS), Supportive Parents, works with the Local Authority and education providers to support parental engagement and participation and to develop good practice. North Somerset Parent Carers (previously Our Voice Counts) is an independent group of parents in North Somerset who represent and advocate for parents / carers of children with SEND. North Somerset Parent Carers are represented on the SEND Program Boards and feedback on experiences of parents and carers in North Somerset.

All schools must have an Accessibility Plan that shows what actions the schools is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with SEND. When considering the curriculum, schools should include broader aspects and not just individual subjects. Planning ways to increase access to the curriculum should include activities to

- overcome any barriers which prevent or make it difficult for disabled children and young people to participate fully in school trips and activities such as school plays, after-school clubs and study support clubs; and
- ensure that the ethos of the school is one which celebrates diversity and encourages inclusion.

There is an example of a School Accessibility Policy and Plan attached to this document (Appendix 1)

Schools can find further guidance on good practice for SEN provision, including access to the curriculum in the document SEN Support Guidance for Schools written by the Vulnerable Learners' Service *[insert link when published]*

7. Access to the Physical Environment

It is the local authority's aim that:

It will seek to improve the physical environment of schools and access to information, 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.

Assessments by schools of physical access to the curriculum and facilities within schools will be encouraged and supported by the local authority's specialist disability access services. The local authority will aim to ensure physical support is in place to enable the plans for all pupils with statements and/or Education Health and Care Plans to be implemented in the relevant timescales.

The Local Authority Equality Team can provide training to schools on the use of tools to identify areas where there is a need for reasonable adjustments or auxiliary aids to support pupils. The aim is to provide this training annually or as requested by schools.

To provide support and training to all schools to ensure they are able to offer pupils and parents and carers fully accessible information.

- a. To advise schools on the most appropriate methods of conveying information to pupils with SEN.
- b. Providing guidance on teaching and supporting pupils who are sensory impaired.
- c. To provide guidance and support on accessible information formats and methods for communication with parents and carers with disabilities

To be implemented in year one of the plan and maintained over the plan period:

- i. Making written guidance materials available to staff, parents and carers,
- ii. Offering expert guidance either by external sources or directly using local authority resources
- iii. As a part of (3) above.

8. Access to Information

The local authority will ensure The Local Offer describes the provision and information available for children with SEND and fulfils the two key requirements of:

- To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it, and
- To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and those with SEND and their parents, and disabled young people and those with SEND, and service providers in its development and review

The local authority will seek to engage with children, young people and their parents and carers in its operation of the Local Offer in terms of its operation and content. It will involve them in reviews of the Local Offer. The Local Offer can be found here <http://nsod.n-somerset.gov.uk/kb5/northsomerset/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

9. Evaluation and Review

This Strategy covers the period 2016-2019 and will be reviewed and updated as required during this period; this will be at least annually. In order to assist with the implementation of the strategy and the duty, the local authority may request that all schools provide the local authority with copies of their accessibility plans.

Appendix

School Accessibility Plan

The School's Governing body holds responsibility for publishing the Accessibility Plan and as part of the regular review process, schools will need to have regard to the need of providing adequate resources for implementing this plan, and reviewing this plan.

An Accessibility Plan will be deemed satisfactory when:

- It is in writing.
- It covers the following three strands of increasing access over time:
 - Increased access to the curriculum for disabled pupils;
 - Improvements to the physical environment to increase access to education and associated services at the school; and
 - Improvements in the provision of information for disabled pupils where it is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

In addition, an Accessibility Plan should be:

- Adequately resourced;
- Implemented;
- Reviewed regularly;
- Revised as necessary (e.g.: when accommodation improvements or repair and maintenance work are being planned);
- Revised, if necessary, during a three year period and ensure information is reported to parents/carers annually;
- A free standing document or part of the school development plan; and
- Published in the context of the Equality Act 2010, which can be interpreted as making the school's plan widely and easily available

An example template is included for school's to use as a starting point for developing their own accessibility plan.

Accessibility Policy and Plan

WRITTEN BY:

RATIFICATION DATE:

FUTURE REVIEW/RENEWAL DATE:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's SEN Policy

Statutory Requirement

This Accessibility Plan is drawn up in compliance with current legislation and requirements, as specified in Schedule 10, relating to Disability, of the Equality Act 2010. School Governors are accountable for ensuring the implementation, review and reporting of progress of the Accessibility Plan over a prescribed period.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act. The effect of the law is the same as in the past, meaning that "schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation".

Purpose of Plan

[insert name of school] School's Accessibility Plan shows how access is to be improved for disabled pupils, staff and visitors to the school, anticipating the need to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs where practicable.

Focus of Plan

The Accessibility Plan contains relevant and timely actions to:

- Increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a physical disability and/or sensory impairments, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with a disability are as equally prepared for life as the able-bodied pupils; (If a school fails to do this they are in breach of their duties under the Equalities Act 2010); this covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or schools visits. It also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum within a reasonable time frame;
- Improve and maintain access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary – this covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education within a reasonable time frame;
- Improve the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with

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 time frame.

[name of school] School's Accessibility Plan relates to the key aspects of physical environment, curriculum and written information.

Definition of Disability

According to the Equality Act 2010 a person has a disability if:

- (a) He or she has a physical or mental impairment, and
- (b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

School Values

[insert information relating to schools' motto, ethos, values driven curriculum as appropriate / relevant]

Links to other documentations and policies

This document should be read in conjunction with the following:

[insert list of relevant documentations and policies for example school development plan, SEND policy, health and safety policy, curriculum policies]

Training and Resources

Training needs for all school staff can be identified in the following ways:

- Audit of staff expertise and training needs
- Recognising specific needs for individual pupils and how staff can be trained to support that child/group of children
- Elements of the school improvement/development plan to be addressed through training

Resources are purchased as and when they are required and/or recommended from professionals working with pupils.

Supporting Partnerships

We will work closely with parents to ensure that the plan is implemented effectively.

The following agencies will be used to support the plan, amongst others:

[insert list of agencies for example educational psychologists, health care professions, advisory teachers]

Complaints Procedures

Positive home school relationships often mean that concerns and complaints can usually be dealt with between parents, carers and school staff. However, when a more formal complaint is made this needs to be in accordance with our school's Complaints Policy.

Monitoring procedures

This Accessibility Policy and Plan will be reviewed every three years by the senior leadership team, including the school's Inclusion Leader, alongside the governing body and ratified accordingly.

Aim	Current good practice	Objectives	Actions to be taken (N- Now P- Potential- when need arises)	Person/People Responsible	Dates to complete actions by
Increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a disability					
Improve and maintain access to the physical environment					

Improve the delivery of written information to pupils					