

ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

Accessibility for Disabled Pupils

May 2018

INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements into one piece of legislation. The 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 (including 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.

The duty has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies 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.

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' 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:

- 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

The Children and Families Act 2014 describes a child or young person as having special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which requires additional support to be made for them. This means that a child or young person will have greater difficulty learning than their classmates; or a disability which holds them back from using facilities available to other children of the same age.

This also includes children and young people with mental health conditions and medical conditions.

VISION

Part of Warrington's vision for its residents is to provide opportunities for the most vulnerable and to build strong, active and resilient communities.

Opportunities for the most vulnerable

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our vulnerable adults and children
- Support people to live as independently as possible
- Provide access to quality care, support, education and learning provision

Build strong, active and resilient communities

- Ensure there are sufficient new homes and quality affordable housing to meet local needs and support growth
- Promote and support healthy, prosperous and vibrant communities
- Our citizens are well educated and skilled with opportunities to progress into training, further/ higher education and employment

For our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) we want them to access to 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.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Warrington has a wide 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. Specialist teams provide advice and support at whole-school, group and individual levels. In addition to our special schools' provision, a number of schools have Designated Provisions as well as supporting children in mainstream schools.

The SENCo Networks for Primary and Secondary colleagues provide an on-going training, development, information and best practice sharing partnership enhancing provision and support for SEND pupils.

INCREASING 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 pupils and in particular for disabled pupils. Parents and carers are key partners in developing support for children and young people with disabilities. Schools must work with both parents / carers and children / young people to develop appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.

The Local Authority has an on-going training and development programme to embed the principles of inclusive practice into all providers' work with children and young people with SEND. This, together with the graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25, should make the curriculum more accessible to all children and young people. For more information, see Warrington's Local Offer: www.warrington.gov.uk/localoffer

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. The LA Local Offer provides information about the provision available to support access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions is available in a separate document which can be found in the Local Offer.

Warrington's SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) and the Warrington Parents & Carers Forum work collaboratively to engage with and support parents and carers of pupils with disabilities to inform and develop good practice within settings.

The SEND Review Board will undertake analysis of outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Good practice will be shared through the SENCo Network and meetings with school leadership teams and governors.

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to schools. All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to disabled pupils.

Much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings. Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools need to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally. Schools should ensure that in an emergency, there is provision to evacuate all building users, including disabled people, to a place of safety.

However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments. Warrington LA is committed to developing the range of provision available across the borough and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Schools may wish to consider an accessibility audit and may seek advice from a health and safety officer, school nurse, SEND Team or a building consultant.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a LA Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. Warrington's Local Offer, 'Ask Ollie', is available at www.warrington.gov.uk/localoffer

For those families who are not able to access the internet access to the Local Offer is available through schools, libraries and local community centres.

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. Specialist SALT Service, to ensure there is a consistent and equitable method of securing expensive technological aids, such as Alternative and Augmentative Communication Aids.

In addition, the Council's Specialist Sensory Education Service are able to make information available through alternative methods and formats.

Warrington's SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) offers impartial information, advice and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) encouraging and developing partnerships between children, young people, parents, schools, the council and other partners.

CONSULTATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This strategy has been produced in consultation with parents and carers, schools and other partners. The LA will support schools in implementing the strategy which will be kept under regular review.