

## Developing an accessibility plan

The Disability Discrimination Act placed new duties upon schools to remove discrimination against pupils with disability in their access to education. It required them to make “reasonable adjustments” to their policies, procedures and practices to accommodate pupils with disability more fully in school life. To begin this process, schools were required to prepare and have in place written plans to increase accessibility by April 2003.

### **Stages in producing an accessibility plan**

Governing bodies may want to include details on specific processes undertaken to develop and monitor the accessibility plan, such as how they:

- Select and complete an access audit to review present level of accessibility of the setting using an audit such as Index for Inclusion (CSIE) <http://www.inclusion.org.uk> or Inclusion Quality Mark <http://www.publicsectormatters.com>.
- Identify actions to reduce obstacles to access for the school community.
- Consult all stakeholders upon the suggested plan and modify it according to their views.
- Finance the plan by identifying costs and incorporating them into current and future budget commitments.
- Set measurable goals and time scales.
- Publicise the plan.
- Implement and evaluate the plan.

Accessibility plans are often an added section to the School Development Plan and are intended to identify the action to be undertaken in the next three years.

Modifications/revisions to the plan, information on action completed so far, action still to be undertaken and that planned for the future, should be detailed and the time frame clarified each year.

The specific areas covered by the accessibility plan that need to be included are: -

### **Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum.**

Governors should identify action in the school access plan to enhance teaching and learning opportunities for all those in the school community with disabilities. These may include:

- Consideration of whole-school ways of increasing participation in activities such as after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities, as well as out-of-school visits, particularly for difficult-to-include pupil groups, such as those with physical or behavioural challenges.

- How threats to participation have been analysed using risk assessment proforma and action taken to reduce those identified risks.
- Identifying how classroom support arrangements, such as deployment of teaching assistants, provision of ICT, contribute to, and enhance learning opportunities.
- Deciding how the implementation of specific strategies such as flexible or shared time-tabling, nurture groups, counselling provision, access to therapy, first day absence response, have enhanced attendance and participation
- Consideration of how classroom/group organisation has been targeted to ensure that all pupils achieved increased levels of school success.
- Description of action to increase curriculum choice and/or flexibility has enhanced the access to appropriate qualifications/attainments.
- Consideration of the school response to pupils through the application of the SEN Code of Practice has improved pupil attainment and how effective communication regarding specific pupil needs has been achieved and is monitored.
- Consideration of how liaison, increased communication and relationships with external agencies has supported and enhanced pupils' access to the curriculum and how this is monitored and improvements targeted.
- Identifying how staff training needs in order to effectively meet the diverse abilities and disabilities of all pupils, including prospective pupils who may require manual handling, signing, personal hygiene support etc, has been identified and supported.
- Identifying pupil peer support mechanisms and the ways that the school has ensured pupils have a voice in decisions that affect them.
- Taking action to ensure that disabled members of the school community are seen in a positive light through publications promoting disability and providing positive role models of adults with disabilities to encourage success and achievement
- Ensuring that action has been undertaken to ensure that parents and carers see themselves as partners in their children's education and are increasingly willing to actively support their children's education.
- Enhancing the positive culture and ethos of the school by undertaking quality marks or other additional intervention to improve the schools ability to include those with disabilities.

**Improving the physical environment of the school to increase accessibility for members of the school community with disabilities.**

The Governing body will want to consider and record reflection upon all areas of the physical environment such as:

- Changes to improve access to doors, stairs, toilet, changing facilities, and consideration of the impact of signs, colour schemes, lighting, heating etc.
- Changes outside of the school building e.g. provision of disabled parking etc.
- Management and organisation issues such as maintenance of lights, fire alarms appropriate to those with hearing impairments etc.
- Increased access to and maintenance of, auxiliary aids, ICT apparatus such as computer hardware/software.
- Improvement to the acoustic environment that might include installation of soundfields/hearing loop systems.
- Improvements of storage implications for wheelchairs and other mobility devices.
- Application and progress on capital funding for major access works funded by the Schools Access Initiative through the County Council, and details on schools funds delegation to support targets such as provision of suitable floor coverings, furniture and layout of the playgrounds.

### **Access to information**

Schools are expected to increase access to information to those with disabilities. The Governors may wish to decide how this is to be achieved, perhaps by:

- Informing readers that school published material is available in a selection of formats e.g. Braille, Makaton, audio tapes and identifying how they can access this provision if requested.
- Considering how to increase information accessibility for those who have English as an additional language or other communication impairments, at school meetings etc.
- Identifying how they have considered the readability of information including that provided by the school website, and how it is monitored to ensure accessibility to a wide range of diverse needs and abilities.
- Identifying how textbooks and other pupil information are selected and provided to meet a diversity of pupil need.
- Ensuring the monitoring of effectiveness of adult support to enhance the opportunities for pupils/parents who have difficulties in accessing information.

### **Monitoring the success of the plan:**

Governors will be required to comment in their annual report to parents on the accessibility plan and identify any revisions as necessary. Evaluation that may be useful to judge success may include:

- Success in meeting identified targets.

- Changes in physical accessibility of school buildings
- Questionnaires, responses from stakeholders e.g. parents, pupils and staff, indicate increased confidence in the schools ability to promote access to educational opportunities for pupils with disabilities.
- Improved levels of confidence in staff in reducing the obstacles to success for pupils with additional needs.
- Recorded evidence that increased numbers of pupils with disabilities are actively participating in all areas of the school
- Recorded evidence that fewer pupils are being excluded from school opportunities as their needs are being more effectively addressed through the application of strategies and procedures.
- Increased levels of achievement for pupils with disabilities.
- Pupil responses; verbally, pictorially and written that indicate that they feel themselves to be included.
- Ofsted inspections identify higher levels of educational inclusion.

### **The role of the LEA in increasing accessibility**

Governors may wish to comment in their report to parents on the impact the County Council has had upon supporting the school to achieve successful implementation of their accessibility plan. This may include identifying how the County has:

- Provided training and awareness opportunities on issues regarding inclusion to staff, governors and parents and how this has been used in school to promote inclusion e.g. uptake of Dyslexia Friendly status, Inclusion Quality Mark, attendance on courses, use and adaptation of County Council provided information, etc.
- Promoted collaboration through the provision of information aimed at sharing good practice
- Encouraged liaison between special and mainstream schools to share expertise and pupil placement
- Ensured that schools are aware of support services that provide advice to schools and staff
- Provided specialist help to identify ways forward in increasing the inclusion of all pupils.
- Linked building adaptations to refurbishment and capital building works.
- Informed schools how information can be provided in a number of different formats.

## **Further information**

Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=2220>

Example access plans:

[http://www.st-johns.stockton.sch.uk/docs/access\\_plan.pdf](http://www.st-johns.stockton.sch.uk/docs/access_plan.pdf)

<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sopd-schoolaccessibilityplantemplate.pdf>

[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/9172/The%20Template%20with%20notes2.doc](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/9172/The%20Template%20with%20notes2.doc)

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