



## NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### SCHOOLS' ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY SEPTEMBER 2016 – 2019

#### Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 and related Equality Duty 2011 reiterate the duty upon schools as laid out in the previous Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The accompanying guidance for schools makes it clear that schools continue to have a duty to produce an accessibility plan.

**Schools** must implement accessibility plans, which are aimed at:-

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

Schools will need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them.

**Local Authorities** must, for the schools for which they are responsible, prepare an accessibility strategy based on the same principle as the accessibility plans for schools.

This accessibility strategy therefore applies to local authority maintained schools, nurseries, children's centres and early years settings. It does not apply to academies, PFI funded schools or private nursery providers on school site. Owners/governing bodies of these provisions must produce their own accessibility strategy in accordance with the Equality Act.

#### KEY PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

**The local authority will seek to ensure that schools within its jurisdiction do not disadvantage or discriminate against a disabled pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability.**

- **Disability:** The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as "when a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". This broad description covers physical disabilities, sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, and learning disabilities and also some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect.
- The Act sets out details of matters that may be relevant when determining whether a person meets the definition of disability. **Long term** is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.



- **Schools:** all maintained schools and settings for which Northamptonshire County Council is responsible.
- **Discrimination:** A public body (in this case, a school) must not disadvantage a disabled pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability. The interpretation of “discrimination” within relation to disability in this accessibility strategy reflects changes specified in the Equality Act 2010.

**The Local Authority will work closely with schools and school governors to agree reasonable adjustments which will allow disabled pupils full access to school facilities and activities**

**Reasonable adjustments:** 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.
- In addition to having a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for particular individual disabled pupils, schools will also have to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally as it is likely that any school will have a disabled pupil at some point. It is important to note that the duty on schools to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory. Schools should not wait until a disabled pupil arrives before making or planning to make adjustments. This may be too late and could lead to a pupil being substantially disadvantaged, it is important therefore for schools to plan a broad range of accessibility improvements over time.
- However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments - e.g. being prepared to produce large font papers for pupils with a visual impairment even though there are no such pupils currently admitted to the school. Such a strategic and wider view of the school’s approach to planning for disabled pupils will also link closely with its planning duties.

It is for schools to consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of each case. (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). However, factors a school may consider when assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment may include the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements and what support is available from other services.

What would be a reasonable “adjustment” is often a matter of judgment and, wherever possible, should be decided by agreement between the local authority, the school and parents/carers e.g. the right of a pupil to attend a school of their choice (within the context of NCC’s admissions procedures) should be balanced with the responsibility of the County Council and or school to



make the most efficient use of its resources.

### **Accessibility Planning**

- All maintained schools will be required to have an accessibility plan which is regularly reviewed (see example Annex A). This is the responsibility of the governing body. As part of this regular review, schools will also need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them.
- An accessibility plan may be a freestanding document but may also be published as part of another document such as the school development plan. It must be freely available to parents/carers.
- **Publishing**, in the context of the Equality Duty, can be interpreted as making the school's accessibility plan widely and easily available, perhaps on the school's website. Hard copies should be available on request and, also on request; the school should be prepared to make available versions of the plan which would be accessible to parents with different communication needs (including English as a Foreign Language). Written information for disabled pupils needs to be given in formats that take account of their specific disabilities and the views expressed by the pupils and their parents about their preferred means of communication.

### **Increasing access to the curriculum for disabled pupils**

- NCC funds a full time Occupational Therapist to support schools with risk assessment and manual handling planning for pupils with Special Educational Needs. Specialist equipment costing in excess of £50.00, which has been identified by the Occupational Therapist, are provided to schools by the LA
- Schools are supported to meet the needs of children with SEN by a range of specialist centrally employed staff.
- Northamptonshire publishes the Descriptors of Special Educational Needs which give in detail the provision which all mainstream schools and early years settings are expected to make for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Training course are available and Senco groups for staff working with early years and school age pupils, these are supported by the local authority.

### **Monitoring Inspection**

"Ofsted inspectors discuss with each school how it is meeting statutory requirements and evaluate and report on the impact of the school's actions. This might include a school's accessibility plan as part of the evidence." Inspecting equalities: briefing for section 5 inspection: September 2012: No. 090197

### **Publicising this Accessibility Strategy**

This Accessibility Strategy will be publicly available on the Northamptonshire County Council Website, on the Local Offer and on the Independent Advisory Support Services website.

## Annex A Template/Sample Accessibility Plan

### ACCESSIBILITY PLAN (Current date to 3 years hence)

{insert name of }School

#### Introduction/Context

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous discrimination law and provides a single piece of legislation covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. This plan seeks to address the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to further the aims of our Vision Statement by:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum

#### Note:

**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. It also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment which may assist these pupils accessing the curriculum**

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

#### Note:

**This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education e.g. enhanced fire alarm systems for pupils with sensory impairment, disabled or allocated parking spaces etc.**

- Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils, staff, parents and visitors

#### Note:

**This could include:- handouts, timetables, textbooks, information about the school and school events. This information should be available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.**

We recognise the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and will review annually in respect of progress and outcomes. Our school's previous access plans were incorporated into a Disability Equality Scheme/Single Equality Scheme {dates}. This access plan includes data and consultation from those schemes where they continue to be relevant.

### **Definition of disability**

The definition of disability under the law is a wide one. A disabled person is someone who has a *“Physical or mental impairment that has an adverse, substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities”*

The definition includes people with a Hearing or Visual Impairment, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, mental health issues and incontinence. People with ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Downs Syndrome and Hydrocephalus are included. Medical conditions such as Cystic Fibrosis, severe Asthma, Diabetes, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Sickle Cell Anaemia and HIV are deemed disabilities. Facial disfigurement, severe Dyslexia, gross obesity and diagnosed eating disorders are all included.

If a person has been disabled in the past (for example, those recovered from cancer and people with a history of mental illness) they are still covered by the legislation for the rest of their life.

#### **Note:**

**It is likely that every school in Northamptonshire has disabled pupils, staff members and service users**

### **Associated policies and plans**

This plan should be read in conjunction with the following school policies, strategies and documents:

#### **NOTE:**

**List here the relevant school documents: This could include:**

- **School vision statement**
- **Equality Duty evidence including Equality Objectives**
- **Special educational Needs policy**
- **Curriculum policy**
- **School evaluation and development plans**
- **behaviour management policy**
- **Asset Management Plan**
- **Health and Safety Policy**

## Development and Publication

The plan has been drawn up in conjunction with pupils, parents, staff and governors of the school and, where possible, the wider community. The plan will be available on the school website and in hardcopy on request.

### Note:

**The plan can be in any format ( see appendix one) . the more people responsible for the monitoring and execution of actions the better. The access plan will be very specific to the setting based on the information gathered and consultation results.**

**Access plans should be easily available to interested parties. Many schools publish plans on their school website, but it is good practice to offer different methods of publication to reach as wide an audience as possible.**

## Monitoring & Review

The plan will be monitored through the *(insert school governing body committee responsible)* and may be monitored by Ofsted during inspection processes. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as and when school policies are reviewed. The terms of reference for all governors' committees will include the need to consider Equality & Diversity issues as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The Accessibility Plan will be reported on annually in respect of progress and outcomes and provide a projected plan for the three year period ahead of the next review date.

Approved:

Date:

Review

Date

## Appendix One

### POSSIBLE ACCESSIBILITY PLAN FORMAT WITH EXAMPLE TARGETS

**{Insert name of school} School Accessibility Plan - 2016 to 2019:**

**Improving the *Curriculum Access/Physical Access or Delivery of Information* (delete as appropriate)**

TARGET	STRATEGY	OUTCOME	TIME FRAME / RESPONSIBILITY	ACHIEVEMENT
<b>Examples curriculum access target:</b>				
1) Training for staff in the identification of and teaching children with ASD and other specific learning difficulties.	All staff attend appropriate training. Outreach provision from external agencies.	All staff are familiar with the criteria for identifying specific needs and how best to support these children in the classroom	Spring term 2016 SENCo/SEN Governor/all teaching and support staff	Children with ASD are successfully included in all aspects of school life
2) Review TA deployment	In review meetings with TAs establish when they are available to support children each day that may be different to current working hours	Adult support is available during key times that individual children may need support e.g. lunchtimes, PE lessons, extra-curricular activities	Reviewed annually Deputy Head/SENCo/TAs	Children who need individual adult support to participate in some activities have access to this support

**Example physical access target:**

1) The school has recently undergone significant improvement. Physical accessibility was considered carefully during design process and consequently no improvements to physical access required over the three year timeline for this plan

2) Improve access to ground floor teaching areas	Ramped access to main entrance and playground entrance to school.	All ground floor teaching areas accessible	School year 15/16 Head/site supervisor/Governor premises committee/LA	Full access for all on ground floor.
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**Example Improved delivery of information target:**

1) Availability of written materials in alternative formats	The school will make itself aware of services available for converting written formats.	The school will be able to provide written information in different formats when required for individual purposes.	Spring term 2016 Literacy lead /SENCo/ Business Manager	Effective delivery of written information to pupils, parents/carers, staff and visitors.
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