



Policy
Document

Woodfield School

Accessibility Policy

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ACCESSIBILITY POLICY



INTRODUCTION

This policy is a statement of the principles and practices of Woodfield School to ensure that discrimination against people with a disability at school does not take place. All staff are expected to be aware of the principles and practices within this policy and to treat disabled people, whether pupils, staff or visitors, fairly and with respect.

Within this policy, the definition of a person with a disability, as defined in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995 and amendments 2005), is one who *'has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'*. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is described in the school's SEN policy. This Accessibility Policy addresses provision for any person with permanent or temporary disability.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LEGISLATION

There are three main strands of support for disabled pupils in school. The relationships between these different duties are important. Support is through:

- the disability discrimination duties (sections 28A -28C of the DDA)
- the SEN framework (Part IV of the Education Act 1996)
- the planning duties (sections 28D -28E of the DDA)

This policy draws on the relevant Acts as well as on the guidance set out in 'Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils' (DfES 2002)

KEY DUTIES

(a) The Disability Discrimination Duties

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since September 2002, the Governing Body has had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

- not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability
- to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage
- to plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils

Furthermore, the Act, under parts 2 and 3, covers disabled staff and members of the public, which would include visitors and parents.

(b) The SEN Framework

Children with a disability are considered to have special educational needs if they have difficulty in accessing education and if they need special education provision to be made for them. Pupils may have a disability, special educational needs or both. The SEN framework is designed to make the provision to meet the special educational needs.

(c) The Planning Duties

Schools must draw up accessibility plans that improve access to education in schools over a period of time. This must include access to the curriculum, the provision of information in a variety of formats and physical access to the education environment.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Accessibility planning is part of the school development planning and improvement process and is included within the School Development Plan (SDP). This ensures regular review and revision through the SDP process. Accessibility planning addresses how the school aims to

increase access to education for disabled pupils in the three areas required by the planning duties in the DDA:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum
- improving the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of written information which is provided to pupils who are not disabled. This should be done within a reasonable period of time and in formats which take account of views expressed by the pupils or parents about their preferred means of communication.

It is a requirement that the school's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised as necessary.

PRINCIPLES

Woodfield School seeks to ensure that no member of the school is unfairly discriminated against as a result of gender, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, social background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstances or sexual orientation.

To this end, the school will seek to:

- Fulfil its legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and any related or subsequent legislation.
- Identify and remove any unjustified discrimination against people with a disability.
- Pursue a programme of development and improvement in facilities, in procedures and in the skills, knowledge and understanding of staff to meet the needs of people with a disability.
- Ensure that disabled staff and pupils have access to the appropriate support and adaptations to enable them to be fully included in the life of the school.
- Take into account the views of individual pupils or members of staff when their requirements are being assessed.
- Provide appropriate information and support to members of staff working with disabled people, either as colleagues or pupils.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable staff and pupils who become disabled during their time at the school to continue in their chosen career or school career, wherever possible.
- Accommodate disabled visitors, wherever reasonably possible, to enable them to participate in events held on school premises.
- Ensure that school premises are accessible and safe for disabled people, as far as this is reasonably practicable and within the constraints of existing buildings.

ACCESSING CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Woodfield is a school for pupils aged 3-19 with severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). It is the degree of learning difficulty that determines a child's placement at the school. In addition to their learning difficulty a child may also have a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment. Many pupils also have an autistic spectrum disorder. It is usual within school at any time to have pupils with:

- Physical disabilities (PD) – including pupils who require wheelchairs for mobility
- Autism (ASD)
- Hearing impairments (HI)
- Visual impairments (VI) – including pupils registered as blind
- Multiple sensory impairment (MSI)

Alongside this range of needs we have a number of pupils whose challenging behaviour presents as one of their major barriers to learning.

The school caters for no pupils who do not have Special Educational Needs or disability.

We are committed to overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individual pupils in all areas of our school environment and curriculum. We do this by:

- Creating effective learning environments.
- Ensuring equality of opportunity through teaching approaches
- Setting individual targets linked to Education Health and Care Plans.
- Using appropriate assessment approaches.
- Effective monitoring of the impact of our policies and teaching on different groups.
- Helping every individual reach their full potential, according to need, in all areas.
- Using appropriate communication methods including symbols, signing and AAC.

We endeavour to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that meets their academic, social, physical and medical needs. With this in mind our curriculum is destination led, functional and fun with an emphasis on preparation for adulthood from the earliest years. The child is at the centre of all we do. We look at the individual needs of the child and plan a curriculum around the child based on their identified needs, ensuring that the 'holistic' needs of the child are being met. Lessons are delivered at a pace and level to suit the individual pupils and teaching is differentiated accordingly. A high staff pupil ratio allows pupils to have the appropriate adult support they need; deployment of staff is kept under regular review. Medical and physical needs are met with advice and support being sought from appropriate health professionals deployed in school by the NHS trust.

Continuing Professional development of all staff, induction procedures and performance management ensure all staff are aware of the importance attached to making the curriculum accessible to all pupils. Access to the curriculum covers not only teaching and learning, but also the wider curriculum such as After School Club activities, leisure, sporting and cultural activities and school visits.

ACCESSING PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The school has invested in technologies that can give pupils access to the curriculum such as:

- sensory room equipment
- switch technology
- VOCAs
- iPads
- interactive white boards
- touch screens
- adapted keyboards
- sound beam
- eye gaze technology

Pupils also require access to the buildings, classrooms and furniture. As the school has a number of pupils who use wheelchairs, mostly attendant propelled but some self-propelled or electric, it is essential that there is good physical access to all areas of the school for all pupils. The school has an on-going programme to enable best access, ensuring for example that doors are wide enough for pupils to get through in their wheelchairs.

The buildings and furniture are monitored and reviewed to ensure that pupils are able to access areas and no factor such as lighting, noise level or lack of appropriate equipment will inhibit access to learning. Being a 'purpose built' SLD site there are no stairs or lifts. Individual pupil's chairs, appropriate tables and standing frames etc are available through liaison and assessment by appropriate professionals including physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Appropriate aids for individuals will be made available, as needed, following such assessments. These will include communication aids (speech and language therapist/school communication team), adapted toilet facilities (occupational therapist) and e.g. adjustable furniture and switch controlled equipment.

The school will consider as part of the regular review:

- Individual pupil/staff/visitor needs
- Necessary resourcing to meet the School Development Plan's priorities each year
- Staff training implications
- Refurbishment and costings
- Capital funding bids

In planning any future building projects and refurbishment of the site and premises we will take into consideration the needs of all pupils, staff, parents and community users with physical difficulties, sensory impairment, learning disabilities and/or medical needs. All new school buildings have to comply with Building Regulations and the Education (School Premises) Regulations. Building work could entail improvements to premises access, lighting, acoustics, decoration schemes and climate control as well as specialised areas such as disabled access toilets, sensory facilities and changing areas.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION

We will take account of the communication needs of pupils, parents, staff and community and will utilise a variety of communication formats and media such as the website, social media and use of sign language. Pupils' communication methods are taken into account and time is allowed to give responses or use equipment/AAC in all situations. We will also be aware of local services provided through the Local Authority and other relevant organisations for translation and communication in alternative formats as and when required or requested.

EMPLOYMENT

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for the school, and therefore, any of its employees to discriminate in the field of employment, against a disabled person for a reason that relates to the persons disability, if that treatment cannot be justified. This applies not only to requirements, but to all areas of employment including the terms of employment, opportunities for promotion, transfer or training, dismissals or redundancies.

Wherever practicable, the school will seek to:

- Employ disabled people in jobs suited to their aptitudes, abilities and qualifications.
- Ensure that disabled employees are considered for promotion according to their aptitudes, abilities and qualifications.
- Ensure that disabled people are not disadvantaged when the renewal of fixed term contracts is being considered.

RECRUITMENT

All candidates will be assessed on their abilities, qualifications and experience in relation to the job description and person specification for an advertised post. It may be that a reasonable adjustment would be required to allow a disabled candidate to meet the requirements of a post and the school would seek to facilitate this if required. Most arrangements to accommodate disabled employees can be made within existing resource constraints or at minimal cost. It should, therefore, not be assumed that employing disabled people will cause problems or generate significant additional cost.

SUPPORT IN EMPLOYMENT

Some disabled people may require additional support when settling into their working environment. In particular, consideration will be given to any adaptation, for example, the provision of equipment or the modification of the working environment, which may be necessary to enable the individual to work on equal terms with non-disabled colleagues. The additional support required will initially be assessed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and reviewed periodically by the team as a whole. Any necessary modifications should ideally be agreed and carried out before the individual commences work. Some of the adjustments may have implications for other staff and it is important that they are consulted about proposed changes. Consideration will also be given to parking facilities, toilet facilities and health and safety issues such as evacuation procedures.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Where a disability is not obvious, the individual will be asked if they wish their colleagues to be informed of their disability. Whenever possible, their wishes in this regard will be respected. In certain cases, it may be appropriate for some colleagues to be aware of the disability in order to be able to respond appropriately in cases of emergency.

TRAINING

Training will be made available to disabled people on the same basis as their colleagues. Where special arrangements are required, for example, accessible training accommodation or large print handouts, this should be put in place.

MEMBERS OF STAFF WHO BECOME DISABLED

Losing the services of a member of staff who becomes disabled can deprive the school of a considerable asset in terms of the skills and experience of the individual as well as an investment in that individual's training and development. Where practicable the school will attempt to retain staff who become disabled and to ensure suitable employment for them.

Senior members of staff will deal as sensitively as possible with these situations and seek help where required. Help should be sought when considering not only the possible effects of the disability but also other consequential disadvantages, such as loss of status, financial loss and reduced self-esteem.

The school is required by law to make reasonable adjustments to enable the individual to continue in post. There are a number of possible options to consider:

- Continuing in the same post – where the disability has occurred as the result of an accident, for example, and the individual has been absent from work for some time, the school will be flexible and sensitive in assisting staff to return to work.
- In circumstances where it is envisaged that some difficulties may be encountered the school will consider a phased return to work or a permanent reduction in hours until confidence and ability are fully restored.
- Redeployment – where it is not practicable for the individual to continue in their former post, the school will attempt to redeploy the individual into a suitable alternative post. The individual's qualifications and skills as well as their own preferences in terms of type of work should be taken into account when trying to identify a suitable vacancy.
- Premature retirement on grounds of incapacity – where it has been decided that redeployment is impracticable, the member of staff may be considered for retirement on the grounds of medical incapacity under the normal terms of the appropriate procedure.
- Termination of employment - if all other options have been explored and found to be impracticable, dismissal on grounds of incapacity should be considered. If it proves to be necessary, termination will be in accordance with the appropriate procedures, which include a right of appeal.

In some cases, the disability will be a progressive condition, which will develop over time and a number of the options could therefore be appropriate at different stages.

VISITORS AND EXTERNAL GROUPS

The school sometimes organises events that are attended by visitors to the school. In these circumstances we will ensure that all buildings used for such an event are appropriately accessible. Information for emergency and evacuation procedures will be provided.

If the school enters into a contract for hire with an external person or group, we will aim to make all possible reasonable adjustments to enable accessibility. However it is the responsibility of the hirer to ensure that the part of the premises used meets the needs of their group.

RESPONSIBILITIES

We recognise that it is the responsibility of every member of our school community to ensure that this policy is actively and consistently reflected in our practice. All school staff are expected to be aware of this policy and to treat disabled people, whether pupils, staff, visitors or members of the public in accordance with these provisions.

We will systematically assess, evaluate and review the impact of our school policies and practice on the life, attitudes and achievement of all groups and individuals amongst our pupils, staff and visitors. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, at least annually.

This policy should be read alongside other Woodfield policies such as the Health and Safety Policy, SEN Policy and the Equality Policy.