

Accessibility Strategy 2017 - 2021

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1. Introduction

The overall aim of this strategy is to ensure that Torbay Council supports schools in meeting the needs of disabled pupils and raising their attainment. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information for disabled pupils is central to the delivery of services. The strategy aims to provide information and a framework to help schools create individual accessibility plans.

2. Vision

We believe that:

- all learners should have access to and enjoy high quality learning experiences, which will enrich their lives and help to realise their full potential.
- children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities should have access to support to ensure that they can participate in the same opportunities as any other young child or person in Torbay.
- parents, carers, schools, the local authority, and partners should work together to ensure opportunities for every child and young person to strive for the highest aspirations.
- we must all work towards removing any barriers that may exist to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude child and young people with SEND.

3. Definition of Disability

The Equalities Act defines a disability as,
'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a persons' ability to carry out normal day-to- day activities.'

To clarify;

- physical and mental impairment includes: sensory impairments, impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects, such as epilepsy; progressive impairments, such as muscular dystrophy; organ specific impairments; developmental impairments, such as autistic spectrum disorder (ASD); learning difficulties, mental health conditions and illnesses, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), phobia's and anxiety
- substantial means neither minor nor trivial
- long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months
- adverse effect means that the impairment affects one or more of the following: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence, ability to lift, carry to otherwise move everyday objects; speech (including language and communication) hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or perception of the risk of physical danger
- normal day-to-day activities are things done on a regular basis including things like eating, washing, walking and learning (including reading, writing, communication, following instruction and adapting to change)

In addition, the definition also covers those with severe disfigurements; impairments which are controlled or corrected by use of medication, prosthesis, an aid or otherwise progressive symptomatic conditions; a history of an impairment; those with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis; and children under the age of 6 with impairments which, in an older person, would result in that person being covered.

4. Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation and introduced a single general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) 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.

In relation to disability, this general 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.

Additional requirement under the Equality Act 2010 for schools to provide Auxiliary Aids for disabled pupils subject to the Reasonable Adjustment duty was introduced in September 2012.

This duty requires schools and Local Authorities to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage. Reasonable adjustments meet the statutory requirements when they act to prevent disabled pupils being placed at a substantial disadvantage and when they enable pupils to participate in education and associated services. Auxiliary Aids includes aids (equipment which helps the disabled person, such as a special chair, adapted text, or special computer equipment or software) and services (something people provide, such as personal assistance). When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress.

The Equality Act 2010 requires Local Authority and schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Strategy and Accessibility Plans that outline how they will improve the accessibility of buildings, access to education and information for disabled pupils over time.

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.*

Schools' Accessibility Plans should also consider access to after school activities and

extended school activities if they are based on their school site. There is a requirement for maintained schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), academies and free schools to produce an Accessibility Plan.

5. Special Educational Needs and Local Context

There is a significant overlap between Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, therefore support for many children with disabilities is provided by schools and the Local Authority through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) framework, guidance for which is set out in the 2015 SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years. The Code emphasises the importance of:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their parents, or young person being sought and taken into account;
- the vital role parents play in supporting their child's education;
- children and young people with SEND having their needs met;
- needs normally being met in mainstream schools or settings; and
- children and young people with SEND being offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, including an appropriate curriculum for the foundation stage and the National Curriculum.

Torbay has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Local Authority works closely with early years providers and the childcare sector to ensure identification and individualised response takes place at the earliest opportunity. The Local Authority works in partnership with schools to ensure that provision is relevant and responsive to needs. The partnership with schools is well-established and long-term with specialist teams providing advice and support at whole-school, group and individual levels. Special schools have strong links with mainstream schools to promote inclusion. Local Authority specialist services and outreach providers from special schools are flexible in their approach to meeting need and work with schools and each other to ensure that all pupils enjoy full participation.

Taking into account significant changes in national policy, there is now a focus on collaborative working between schools, partner agencies and the Local Authority through such developments as the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Local Authority also works alongside the local SENDCo Network to provide an on-going training and development enhancing provision and support for SEND pupils and responding to local need.

6. Increasing Provision and Access to curriculum

The Local Authority provides advice and guidance to all supports schools (regardless of whether they are maintained schools, academy schools or free 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 Local Authority website and Local Offer both provide information about the provision available to support access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The SEND Code of Practice includes advice on approaches to identification of need and the graduated approach to meeting identified needs.

The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 is leading to the development of more

integrated packages of support which will support children and young people with disabilities in accessing the curriculum.

The Local Authorities SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) and the Torbay Parents Participation Forum (PPF) works collaboratively in supporting the Local Authority to engage with parents and carers of pupils with disabilities to inform and develop good practice within settings.

The variety of services which the Local Authority already offers to promote the inclusion of disabled pupils and their families in education includes:

Admission to schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures all admission arrangements comply with the DfE School Admissions Code. Co-ordinates applications for places at primary and secondary schools as part of the normal admissions rounds. provides clear information to both schools and parents/carers in relation to admissions and pupils with SEND.
Advisory Teacher for Early Years Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> liaises with schools and organise transition meetings to share information about individual children who have special educational needs and disabilities, prior to them starting school. These meetings are attended by parents and other agencies working with the child. is able to maintain support for the child up to the end of the Foundation Stage. provides advice and support to parents/carers, carry out initial assessment of children and provide training and advice for educators.
Portage Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nurtures and promotes all aspects of a child's development. delivers a weekly home teaching service, work alongside parents/carers to set realistic goals for their children and devise and demonstrate a range of appropriate activities for the parents/carer to undertake with their child.
Educational Psychology Service (part-traded service)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acts as a consultation, assessment and advisory service to the LA and schools. These are achieved through day to day liaison with schools; the attendance of planning meetings and case conferences; the assessing and advising of individual child's needs; the provision of in-service training and convening of school SEN Coordinator support groups; and by engaging in 'service maintenance' activities such as obtaining client feedback and carrying out performance reviews.
Torbay Hearing Support Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports children, families and schools by helping to identify, assess and meet the needs of children with hearing impairments. This involves a significant amount of individual case work. offers guidance and training on a range of issues relating to children with hearing disabilities. This includes audiological issues, hearing aids, ideas for play, language development, hearing tactics and liaising with other professionals on behalf of the child and his or her family. works on a one to one basis with each child.
School Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assesses the individual needs of each pupil, in line with Torbay's

	<p>Transport Policy, and where appropriate tailors the transport provided to meet the needs of the specific child.</p>
<p>Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures that the key duty of the LA to identify, assess and arrange suitable provision for children with SEN is carried out. This is achieved through individual allocated caseworkers, liaison with parents/carers, caseworker involvement in attending formal meetings and multi-agency co-operation. manages the transfer of Statements and EHC plans in line with regulations. manages the statutory assessment procedure, issuing EHC plans where required. allocates additional resources to mainstream schools to meet the needs of children and young people with Statements and EHC plans. arranges admission to appropriate provision, including specialist provision where required. monitors and reviews the progress of children and young people with Statements and EHC plans. commissions specialist and outreach services to support pupils with special needs and the schools they are attending.
<p>Commissioned specialist services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visual impairment support service from the West of England School. The school provides a 3 day a week service to the LA providing guidance on curriculum matters, mobility issues and Braille training. ICT advisory service for pupils with special needs from the Royal School for Deaf.
<p>Commissioned outreach services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chestnut Mayfield Preston
<p>Commissioned service from Careers Southwest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports transition planning and liaising with those involved with the child. helps young people and their carers identify the most appropriate post-school education, training or work.
<p>Commissioned independent information, advice and support service for parents/carers and young people (SENDIASS Torbay)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offers independent information, advice and support service for parents/carers and young people in relation to special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes: providing clear information; listening to parent/carers concerns; providing phone or personal support with issues, letters and/or meetings; and empowering parents/carers to be fully involved with and make informed choices about their child's education. encourages effective communication between parents/carers, schools and other appropriate professionals. offers relevant training opportunities. signposts to other appropriate services and/or avenues of support.

7. Improving the Physical Environment of Schools

Improving the physical environment of schools includes access to and within the school grounds and buildings, in addition to the provision of physical aids which improve access to a disabled child.

All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to disabled pupils, although, much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings. Any work undertaken by the Council in creating additional school places will also comply with current building regulations.

When making improvements schools need to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, but, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability. Improvements could also be achieved by reasonable adjustments such as the allocation of rooms for particular specialisms, the removal of obstructions from circulation areas, improving the acoustic or visual environment and changing classroom layouts including the creation of safe spaces, calming areas and individual workstations. Physical aids to education could include the provision of specialist seating or desks and ICT equipment.

Advice and guidance should be sought from Physiotherapists / Occupational Therapists who are working with the children who have specific requirements where adaptations may be required.

Schools have had a statutory duty to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan since September 2002 and continue to have this duty under the [Equality Act 2010: Schedule 10, Paragraph 3](#) and [Disability Discrimination \(prescribed Times and Periods for Accessibility Strategies and Plans for Schools\) \(England\) Regulations, 2005](#).

School Accessibility Plans must:

- be in writing.
- outline how the school will improve access to education for disabled pupils over time, covering the following three strands:
 - Increasing access to the curriculum for disabled pupils;
 - Improving the physical environment to increase access to education and associated services at the school; and
 - Improving the provision of information for disabled pupils where it is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.
- be published in the context of the Equality Act 2010, i.e. on the school website with hard copies provided upon request, and also be able to be provided in alternative accessible formats to meet the needs of those requesting it.
- be revised at least every 3 years.

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

A template for the school accessibility plan has been produced for schools to use (Appendix 2)

A School Access Audit Checklist is available and free to download at: <http://www.accessaudits.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/FREE-SCHOOL-ACCESS->

It is important that the schools consider the long-term access needs of the school. Schools should use the routine refurbishment and other maintenance and equipment budgets to improve the physical environment of the school and maintain the standard of accessibility upgrade works already carried out. The Equality Act requires schools to resource their Disability Equality Schemes/ Accessibility plans adequately. Schools should recognise the costs of implementing the plan as legitimate expenditure, which should be incorporated into current budget commitments.

8. Improving the Delivery and Access of information

The planning duty requires written information normally provided by a school to be made available to disabled pupils. Such information should take account of pupils' disabilities, as well as the preferred formats for pupils and parents; it should also be made available within a reasonable time frame.

Although the duty relates primarily to written information, schools will be advised to consider how other formats that could be made available. The Local Authority Corporate Communications Team provides detailed guidance on how to produce clear communications by advising on the styles and formats to use. The team also provides guidance on how to produce information in large print, braille, symbols or as an audio-tape.

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer has the express purpose of simplifying and making information about processes, systems and services that support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities more accessible.

In addition, the Torbay SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) is able to offer impartial information, advice and support over the phone and in person.

9. Monitoring, evaluation and review

This Strategy is being recommended for approval to the Policy Development and Decision Group. The strategy will run for a period of 4 years.

The action plan and the Local Authorities performance against the identified action points will be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis through annual reports.

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

School improvement visits will include a question regarding the school's accessibility policy and their implementation of the Equality Act 2010.

Ofsted inspectors will discuss with each school how it is meeting statutory requirements and evaluate and report on the impact of the school's actions.

This Strategy will be published on the Torbay Local Offer website www.fis.torbay.gov.uk

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