

**Meeting: Policy Development and Decision Group**

**Date: 28 June 2017**

**Wards Affected: All**

**Report Title: Accessibility Strategy – 2017 - 2021**

**Is the decision a key decision? No**

**When does the decision need to be implemented?**

**Executive Lead Contact Details: Julien Parrott, Executive Lead for Adults and Children, [julien.parrott@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:julien.parrott@torbay.gov.uk)**

**Supporting Officer Contact Details: Andy Dempsey, Director of Children's Services, 01803 208949, [andy.dempsey@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:andy.dempsey@torbay.gov.uk)**

---

## **1. Proposal and Introduction**

- 1.1 In order for disabled pupils to realise their full potential as learners, it is essential that they are able to access the curriculum, the physical learning environment and information and guidance about educational opportunities in their locality. The Equality Act 2010 requires local authorities and schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Strategy and Accessibility Plans (at a school level) outlining how they facilitate accessibility to buildings, information and educational provisions.
- 1.2 There is a significant overlap between these obligations and those set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (2015). This reflects that many children supported through SEND arrangements will have a disability. The revised Accessibility Strategy 2017–21, attached at Appendix 1, has developed within the context of the collaborative working between schools, partner agencies, families and the local authority for SEND provision and seeks to ensure that accountability considerations are robustly addressed.
- 1.3 The strategy has been developed by the Head of Education, Learning and Skills in consultation with key partners and stakeholders. It is supplemented by model documents to enable schools to develop a site specific accessibility plan, while the strategy itself will be supported by a detailed action plan to ensure it meets the needs of disabled pupils and helps to raise their attainment.

## **2. Reason for Proposal**

- 2.1 Disability is defined within the Equality Act 2010, as ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities.’
- 2.2 The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within a single piece of legislation and introduced a single, general Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools, fee schools and academies. Its duties extend to all protected characteristics – race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassessment.
- 2.3 Local authorities and schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not of a substantial disadvantage. In deciding upon reasonable adjustments, local authorities and schools will need to consider their potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort balanced against inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, lack of opportunity and diminished progress. There is a further requirement to provide Auxiliary Aids for disabled pupils to promote accessibility for disabled pupils as part of the reasonable adjustable duty.
- 2.4 The Accessibility Strategy sets out how the local authority, including schools and partners, will:
- Increase provision and access to the curriculum;
  - Improve the physical environment of schools;
  - Improve the delivery and accessibility of information; and,
  - Monitor, review and evaluate impact.
- 2.5 The Strategy is also supported by a model School Accessibility Plan (Appendix 2) that schools can use to develop a site specific plan in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and Disability Discrimination (prescribed Times and Periods for Accessibility and Plans for Schools) (England) Regulations 2005.
- 2.6 Implementation of the Accessibility Strategy will be supported by an action plan (Appendix 3) which will be populated in consultation with schools and key partners and subject to regular monitor and review to ensure it delivers improved outcomes for disabled children and young people.

## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

- 3.1 That the Accessibility Strategy 2017-2021 be approved.
- 3.2 That the Head of Education, Learning and Skills be authorised to develop an action plan in consultation with schools and key partners and stakeholders.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Accessibility Strategy 2017-2021

Appendix 2: Example School Accessibility Plan

Appendix 3: Accessibility Strategy: Action Plan Template