



**TAUNTON
SCHOOL**

WS.011.

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN AND DISABILITY POLICY

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Introduction

1. This Accessibility Policy confirms that it is the School's policy to give access to disabled people, the School is pleased to make the Policy available to interested parties.
2. 'Disabled people' includes children, young people and adults, as pupils, employees, governors, parents and carers and other members of the wider community that might use the School's premises who may have a broad spectrum of impairments including:
 - a. Medical conditions such as; Cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, HIV, multiple sclerosis and mental health conditions
 - b. Mobility difficulties or hearing or sight impairment
 - c. People with learning difficulties

Admissions to the School

3. The School's Admissions Policy states that:

'We do not discriminate regarding entry. We welcome pupils with special educational needs, providing that our Educational Progress Staff can offer them the support that they require to be able to thrive in our educational environment. We welcome pupils who have physical disabilities provided that our site is accessible to them.

We advise parents of children who have special educational needs or physical disabilities to discuss their child's requirements with us so that we can make adequate provision for him/her. Where possible parents should provide a copy of an Educational Psychologist's report or a medical report. We will discuss thoroughly with parents the adjustments that can reasonably be made for their child if he/she becomes a pupil at the school.'

Application of the Admissions Policy

4. In applying its Admissions policy the School depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the criteria required to maintain and, if possible to improve, the educational and general standards for all its pupils commensurate with the ethos of the School. The School must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, so that there is every chance that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful school career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at the School.
5. The School applies these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not

to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability.

6. The School asks parents to advise it of any disabilities in respect of a prospective pupil at the time of application, including social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Parents who do not disclose a child's disability may be asked to leave if reasonable adjustments cannot be made. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the School may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards as appropriate. The School will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

7. One of the obvious problems which the School has, in common with many other schools, is the lay-out of its many buildings over a wide area. Some buildings have several stories and are without lifts and some are listed which may limit improvements such as achieving level access.

8. Another problem is the system in the Senior School and some other parts of the School, again common to many schools, of having fixed classrooms for each subject, based on the valid grounds of having all the facilities for that subject in one place. This requires pupils to go from classroom to classroom, often up stairs in buildings without lifts. The boarding facilities pose similar problems. It can be seen that a pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these problems, or may be prohibited altogether from access to some or all of the educational and other facilities the School offers.

9. These matters cannot be remedied by reasonable adjustments because major alterations would be needed to the physical features of the School at what would be a prohibitive cost.

School's Legal Duties

10. The School has two sets of duties, the *non-discrimination* duties and the *planning duties*, under which it is unlawful:

- a. to treat a disabled pupil or prospective pupil *less favourably* for a reason related to his/her disability than someone to whom that reason does not apply, without justification for doing so;

So, a boy with epilepsy refused admission to an independent school because of his likelihood of having fits is obviously receiving less favourable treatment for a reason related to his disability.

- b. to fail to make *reasonable adjustments* to admission arrangements and in relation to education and associated services to ensure that disabled pupils or prospective pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled pupils, without justification for doing so.

11. In making reasonable adjustments schools do not have to:
- a. provide auxiliary aids (i.e. a special piece of equipment such as a hearing loop) or services (i.e. arranging additional support such as a designated classroom assistant).
 - b. make physical alterations to buildings – such as the installation of lifts.
12. To determine what reasonable adjustments should be made a school should identify what could possibly be done and then apply a reasonableness test by taking the following factors into account:

- the need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards;
- the financial resources available;
- the cost of taking a particular step;
- the extent to which is practicable to do so;
- health and safety requirements;
- the interests of other pupils.

13. The issue of reasonable adjustments is obviously a vital area of the legislation and each case will depend on its own facts. Therefore the best means of illustrating the action which schools should consider is by way of examples. Many are available in the Code of Practice for Schools drawn up by the Disability Rights Commission (a key document whose internet reference is: www.drc-gb.org/drc/documents/schoolscop2.doc). Two examples are included here:

- (i) A pupil with learning difficulties finds it difficult to follow the more theoretical parts of classroom teaching and her parents ask that teachers go very slowly over the parts she finds difficult to ensure she has understood the points being made. However, the slow pace of delivery would prevent the other pupils finishing the syllabus and put their grades at risk. It is likely to be reasonable for the school not to make this adjustment, although other alternatives should be considered, such as extra tuition outside classroom hours as might be offered to any other struggling pupil.
- (ii) A sixth form pupil who has been diagnosed dyslexic finds it difficult to read long texts and, ideally, would like all his books on audio tape. However his A-level courses have very long reading lists which change every year, and the school deems it impractical to provide every book in tape form. This is likely to be deemed reasonable provided the school has researched other means of him accessing the reading list.

Policy Review

14. The School has a duty to actively monitor its Accessibility Plan on a three year cycle.

15. To achieve this, biannually the SPC in each part of the School co-opting additional members whose experience would be of assistance should review the Accessibility Policy aiming to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils (including those with special educational needs) can participate in the School's curriculum;

The action that should be considered includes staff deployment, timetabling, curriculum options and staff information and training.

- Improve the provision to disabled pupils of information which is already in writing for pupils who are not disabled.
- improve the physical environment of the school in order to increase the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services offered by the school;

This means easier access to buildings including steps, stairways, exterior surfaces and paving, building entrances and exits (including those for emergency use), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting, ventilation, lifts, floor coverings, signs and furniture.

It also means the installation of physical aids to access education which includes ICT equipment, enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept key boards, switches, specialist desks and chairs and portable aids for children with poor hand/eye skills, such as extra robust scientific glassware and specialist pens and pencils.

Planning Duties

16. To fulfil the School's planning duties, each SMT should also try to anticipate problems before they arise, to avoid placing disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage when their cases come to be considered, the Disability Policy Review Committee will consider:

- the training of willing staff to administer medicines to pupils in particular circumstances;
- the introduction of an equal opportunities policy covering disability and its publication as part of a school's prospectus;
- the amendment of admissions forms/entrance applications to request details of any reasonable adjustments a pupil may require in relation to the entrance examination, open day or entry to the school;
- the creation of special early admissions meetings with parents of disabled prospective pupils to discuss any special arrangements for exams;
- the inclusion of disability awareness within staff training programmes;

- working with the school's medical advisers and educational psychologists to devise a list of common disabilities, identifying in each case the range of potential adjustments required depending upon the severity of the disability.
- How to allocate the contingency sum within the maintenance budget for addressing accessibility issues on an annual basis and in response to conditions which may change within the year.