

Accessibility in Schools Policy

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Purpose

Schools have a duty to plan increased accessibility to the curriculum, the physical environment of the school and improve the delivery of written information to disabled pupil/students.

Scope

Improving access to education and educational achievement by disabled pupil/students is essential to ensuring equality of opportunity, and full participation in society. This needs to be in a planned and strategic way.

Accessibility in Schools Policy (Concise Statement)

All pupil/students with an autistic spectrum disorder may be considered to have a disability as a consequence of their autism. The Disability and the Equality Act 2010, The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 & 2009 and The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, emphasise the requirements for all schools to promote accessibility for those pupil/students with physical and sensory disabilities. The NAS accepts and endorses these intentions and therefore for the purpose of this policy document pupil/students with a disability will mean those who have physical and/or sensory impairments in addition to their core autistic disorder.

The NAS SPELL Framework emphasises structure, positive approaches, empathy, low arousal and links for understanding and responding to the needs of people with an autistic spectrum disorder. Using SPELL small alterations to the physical environment and teaching approaches can vastly increase the

capacity and accessibility for children with autism or related disorders to learn more effectively.

For many pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder, seemingly incidental environmental factors will greatly increase stress levels, potentially leading to challenging behaviour and reducing their opportunity for learning. Consequently buildings will be audited in line with SPELL to ensure acoustics, lighting, smells, signage and classroom organisation are calm and ordered in such away to reduce anxiety and aid concentration.

In accessing the curriculum pupils with ASD and additional sensory and/or physical disabilities will have full access to all areas, provided at a suitable level and differentiated according to need. All staff will be trained in autism and positive behavior support.

All schools will have written three year accessibility plans in place that will form part of the annual School Improvement Plan. These plans will focus on:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services and;
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of written information which is provided to pupils who are not disabled.

This plan will be reviewed and revised regularly and be available for inspection by any interested parties at reasonable times. The Principal in consultation staff, pupils, students, parents and any other relevant party will devise the plan.

Equal Opportunities

Consideration will be given to ensure that services are developed appropriate to age, culture, disability and ethnic background of pupils, wherever possible.

Accessibility in Schools - Procedure

1. Accessibility plans will be reviewed annually as part of the School Improvement Plan process.
2. Plans will assess current accessibility and identify barriers to access or inclusion. A review of access should cover the physical environment, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, teaching and learning practices, the curriculum, staff training, the culture and ethos of the school and the provision of written information. Data on current and likely pupil/student population will also be taken into account.

3. Measures to eliminate barriers will include staff training, teaching and learning practices, refurbishment and maintenance, minor and major capital expenditure. These will be prioritised into short, medium and long-term aims with clear implementation arrangements and time frameworks.
4. All new school buildings will comply with the Building Regulations and the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999.
5. Plans will be developed through:
 - 5.1 Access audit and review of current activities
 - 5.2 Identifying and devising actions
 - 5.3 Setting of goals and targets which are measurable
 - 5.4 Consultation with staff, parents, pupils and other bodies
 - 5.5 Publication of the plan
 - 5.6 Implementation and allocation of adequate resources
 - 5.7 Evaluation.
6. Accessibility should be considered in the purchasing of all resources. For example the installation of bar taps in science, food and art rooms, and low pile high density carpet to assist wheelchair users.

Plans will include three areas:

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

7. This should not only cover teaching and learning but the wider curriculum such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities or school visits.
8. Schools will use a variety of approaches when planning and delivering the curriculum to draw upon the different strengths and aptitudes of pupils. This might include using flexible grouping arrangements where pupils with disabilities can work with their peers, and encouraging peer support.
9. Access should be considered at a 'whole school' level. **Improving the physical environment of the schools and residential units.** This will include steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces and paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting, heating, ventilation, lifts, signs, interior surfaces, floor coverings, room décor and furniture. Improvements to physical access may include – ramps, handrails, lifts, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, adjustable lighting, blinds, induction loops, well designed room acoustics and way-finding systems.
10. Physical aids to access education might include ICT equipment, enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept keyboards, switches, photocopying enlargement facilities, specialist desks and chairs and portable aids for children with motor coordination and poor hand/eye skills such as extra robust scientific glassware and specialist pens and pencils. These lists are not exhaustive.

Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils

11. Information should take into account pupils' disabilities, pupils' and parents' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame. Examples include handouts, timetables and information about school events. Alternative formats will be used such as large print, pictorially, a recognised symbol system, Braille, by use of ICT, providing the information orally, lip speaking, sign language or other appropriate means.

Measure

HMI, Ofsted, Autism Accreditation, Health and Safety Inspections, Education Scotland, The Care Inspectorate

Accessibility in Schools - Reference

SEN and Disability Act 2001

The Education Act 1996

Other relevant policies and guidance

Inclusive schooling: children with special educational needs - 2012

Equality Human Rights Commission

British Medical Association Guidance

Ofsted

The Council for Disabled Children –

(1) Come on In - Access to goods and Services – (A short introduction for Children's Services, which gives details of DDA duties and offers guidance on good practice).

(2) Early years and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 - What service providers need to know - It gives details of how the new DDA duty applies in early years settings and suggests some simple approaches that will help ensure disabled children are not discriminated against.

Both available free of charge from Council for Disabled Children, 8 Wakely Street, London EC1V 7QE / Email cdc@ncb.org.uk

The SPELL Framework

Special Educational Needs Policy SO-0134

Education Scotland Act 1980

Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000