

Children, Education & Families

Schools Accessibility Strategy: *"Everyone Joining In"* Revised May 2017



**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Children, Education & Families**

SCHOOLS ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty build on previous legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act. Available guidance makes it clear that schools are still required to produce an accessibility plan. This strategy sets out how Oxfordshire County Council proposes to increase access to education for disabled pupils in the schools for which it is responsible, specifically to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- Improve the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services; and
- Improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

This strategy applies to:

- Disabled pupils who are in schools now;
- Disabled pupils who are in the school system but at an earlier key stage; and
- Disabled pupils who are not yet in the school system but about whom Oxfordshire County Council and other agencies may have information.

The strategy is for schools, governors, parents/carers, professionals and members of the local community. It should inform individual School Access Plans developed with children and young people with disabilities and their parents/carers,

This accessibility strategy applies to local authority maintained schools, nurseries, and early years settings. It does not apply to academies, PFI funded schools or private nursery providers on school sites; however, such providers may find the information and case studies helpful. Owners/governing bodies of such provisions must produce their own accessibility strategy in accordance with the Equality Act.

2. Values

The Children, Education & Families directorate works to the County Council's [Equality Policy 2012 -2017](#) and this consistent approach in conjunction with this Accessibility Strategy will ensure that this is the best way forward for our disabled children and disabled young people in our schools and early years' settings.

Children and young people in Oxfordshire have told us what equality means for them:

- Being fair and having equal rights.
- Being able to be different but not being treated differently.
- Being different but not being picked on because of it.
- Being the same and being treated the same.

Children and young people in Oxfordshire have told us what diversity means for them:

- People being different.
- People being different and being proud to be different but not being picked on for it.
- What we thought it was that makes us, us.

As part of the review of this strategy in 2016 all schools were offered, via Schools News, the chance to participate in a Listening Post activity to help inform this strategy and their own

Accessibility Plans or to run their own Listening Post exercise. A [presentation](#) has been developed which any school can use

The "big messages" from children and young people who participated in the activity were:

- The pace of life and learning in schools is a barrier to being included;
- It can be embarrassing asking for help;
- Bullying is an issue;
- Making friends can be difficult;
- Small things make a big difference; and
- It can be exhausting.

3. Legislation

Local authorities and schools have had a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils since 2002. This was originally under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) and subsequently under the Equality Act 2010. There are three key duties:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favorably for a reason related to their disability.
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage.
- To publish and implement accessibility strategy to increase access to school education for disabled pupils.

From September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for local authorities and schools included a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. Many of the reasonable adjustments that schools are already making for disabled pupils include the use of some auxiliary aids, such as coloured layovers for dyslexic pupils, pen grips, adapted PE equipment, adapted keyboards and computer software. Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and will often involve a change in practice rather than the provision of expensive pieces of equipment or additional staff.

The reasonable adjustments duty is triggered only where there is a need to avoid 'substantial disadvantage'. 'Substantial' is defined as being anything more than minor or trivial. Whether or not a disabled pupil is at a substantial disadvantage or not will depend on the individual situation. Go to [EHRC - Human rights: practical guidance](#) for more information

These duties apply to disabled pupils, as defined in the Equality Act 2010. The Act says that a pupil has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. More guidance on the definition of disability is available from <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010>.

The definition can include a wide range of impairments, including hidden impairments such as a mental health need, dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or people diagnosed with cancer, HIV infection or multiple sclerosis. An impairment does not itself mean that a pupil is disabled. It is the effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities that has to be considered.

The test of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activity is whether it affects one or more of the following:

- Mobility;
- Manual dexterity;
- Physical co-ordination;
- Continence;
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- Speech, hearing or eyesight;
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; or
- Perception of risk of physical danger.

A child's ability to memorise, concentrate, learn, speak, move, make and maintain positive relationships is central to their education. An impairment that has a long-term and substantial effect on a child's ability to do these things may amount to a disability.

Some disabled pupils also have special educational needs (SEN) and may be receiving support via school-based SEN Support provision or have a statement of SEN (SSEN) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Just because a disabled pupil has SEN or has a statement/EHC plan does not take away the duty to make reasonable adjustments for them. In practice, of course, many disabled pupils who also have a statement of SEN/EHC plan will receive all the support they need through the SEN framework and there will be nothing extra the school has to do. However, some disabled pupils will not have SEN, and some disabled pupils with SEN will still need reasonable adjustments to be made for them in addition to any support they receive through the SEN framework.

Other duties

Oxfordshire County Council has an [Equality Policy 2012 – 2017](#) which sets out how the Council is approaching its responsibilities for ensuring that all residents in Oxfordshire have fair access to services and equal life chances.

Since October 1999 it has been illegal for local authorities and governing bodies to discriminate against disabled people in the provision of non-educational services on school premises on the basis of their disability.

Health and Safety

The Equality Act 2010 does not override health and safety legislation. If making a particular adjustment would increase the risks to the health and safety of any person (including the disabled pupil in question) then this is a relevant factor in deciding whether it is reasonable to make that adjustment. However, as with the approach to any question of health and safety and risk assessment, schools are not required to eliminate all risks. Suitable and sufficient risk assessments should be used to help determine where risks are likely to arise and what action can be taken to minimise those risks. Risk assessments should be specific to the individual pupil and the activities in question. Proportionate risk management relevant to the disability should be an ongoing process throughout a pupil's time at the school.

There might be instances when, although an adjustment could be made, it would not be reasonable to do so because it would endanger the health and safety either of the disabled pupil or of other people. There might be other instances where schools could make anticipatory reasonable adjustments in line with health and safety legislation, ensuring compliance with, and not infringing, that legislation.

Example 1: *‘A disabled pupil who attends a mainstream school has a tracheotomy which needs monitoring and he needs occasional intervention to clear his airways. The school carries out a risk assessment and identifies that he needs to have a member of staff who is able to provide the necessary monitoring and intervention with him at all times. The school has several support staff who are trained and contractually obliged to administer medication to pupils. The school arranges for these staff and any others who volunteer to be trained in tracheotomy care and then timetables the trained staff so one is always able to monitor the pupil. All staff are trained in identifying when the pupil needs intervention and provided with radio microphones so that they can summon assistance from another member of staff if necessary. These are reasonable adjustments for the school to make in response to the risk assessment’.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Example 2: *A disabled pupil with a stair climbing wheelchair applies to a large secondary school with several flights of stairs. The school prevents him from using the stair climbing wheelchair in the school as they think it will be dangerous. However, after carrying out a risk assessment and finding out more about the wheelchair the school realises that it doesn’t present a significant health and safety risk and therefore it would be reasonable for them to allow him to use it.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Charging arrangements for making reasonable adjustments

It is unlawful for a setting or school to charge a child for making reasonable adjustments in any circumstances, whatever the financial cost to the school and however the setting or school is funded.

4a. Increasing access to the curriculum, extended curriculum and residential trips

The County Council provides support to schools to help them implement their accessibility plans. This includes:

- Providing training and awareness opportunities to staff, governors, parents and Carers;
- Sharing good practice;
- Encouraging collaboration between groups of schools to share expertise;
- Ensuring that schools are aware of support services that provide advice to schools and staff; and
- Providing specialist help to identify ways forward in increasing the inclusion of all pupils.

Oxfordshire’s [SEN Support Guidance](#) for schools contains detailed guidance on removing barriers to achievement and improving participation in the curriculum together with guidance on equalities duties.

A range of County Council services are available to schools to provide advice on curriculum access. Information about these services can be found on the [Local Offer](#). Advice and support to enable a fully inclusive experience and curriculum access for all pupils is provided in a variety of ways:

- Subject-specific guidance;
- Consultancy and training on all aspects of SEN, access and disability;
- School improvement advice;
- Individual casework, consultation;
- Written guidance;
- Monitoring;
- Training for individual schools or groups of schools;
- Countywide training and project development; and
- Teaching support.

Many children and young people have mental health needs which are a barrier to their inclusion in education and wider school life. [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools \(DfE June 2014\)](#) provides useful guidance on supporting pupils with mental health needs. There is much that be done in schools and settings to make reasonable adjustments for the increasing numbers of children and young people with mental health disabilities:

Example 4: Mental Health Need: Anxiety leading to unwillingness to attend school.

A pupil suffering from severe anxiety leading to unwillingness to attend school. The school discusses additional provision and support available with the learner and family in order to agree a plan of support. The plan provides a key adult to support the learner who has some additional training in mental health needs and is regularly reviewed. The learner's voice is at the centre of the planning, taking into account the advice from mental health services and the current family situation. A part time timetable is implemented in agreement with the family. The school provides a nurture space for learning in school before supporting the learner to attend mainstream lessons. The learner is not able to work at home as this increases anxiety. The plan is regularly reviewed through a multi-agency approach looking at the push / pull factors for the learner attending school whilst working to overcome the barriers to attendance through self-regulation of anxiety.

Children and young people tell us that the impact of their particular disability is often that they cannot keep up with the pace of what goes on in school, be it in or outside the classroom. This may be because they need time to process information which non-disabled pupils can assimilate more quickly or because they can move less quickly or tire more readily because of a disability. Once again it is important the schools and settings consider what reasonable adjustments can be made to make the whole school experience accessible to all pupils including those with a disability:.

Example 5: Medical needs: pupils who need **more time** to learn

A year 11 pupil with significant health needs misses a considerable amount of school time due to his need to attend hospital and because he has regular periods of absence when he isn't well enough to attend school. The pupil has a reduced timetable and is taking a total of six GCSEs. This ensures the best chance of success at grade 5 or above, keeping all post 16 options open. The additional time this frees up gives him the opportunity of catching up on work that he has missed. His subject teachers ensure that when he is absent the work he has missed is emailed to him with any teacher resources that may be helpful.

Example 6: Processing difficulties and keeping up: pupils who need more time to learn

A pupil has a physical and sensory disability that makes it difficult for her to process information at the same pace as her peers. Her fine motor control is poor and this affects her ability to word process on her laptop at the speed needed to complete tasks

in her mainstream classroom. She also has a visual impairment that worsens when she is tired.

*To reduce her level of fatigue she uses specialist **Read and Write** software for reading and recording. The software has excellent prediction and text to speech facility which can be adapted to meet her needs. All resources are modified in an appropriate font and when she tires a Teaching Assistant helps her to record by word processing her ideas which she later edits herself. Peers are encouraged to use her keyboard with her when working together. A DropBox on the pupil's laptop allows her teachers to send worksheets or homework electronically. The school applies for extra time for all assessments and public examinations.*

Most pupils with sensory and physical difficulties are educated in mainstream schools, with the support of SENSS Sensory, Physical Disability and Complex Needs Teams and the Integrated Therapy Service. Many schools are very experienced in making reasonable adjustments :

Example 7: *A year 10 pupil with visual impairment will need adapted papers for all public examinations. All subject teachers working with the pupil are aware of this and they make practice papers available to support staff at least two weeks ahead of use so that font, background, diagrams and tables can be appropriately modified in line with the adaptations allowed by the examination board. Trained and experienced TA's are made available on the day of examinations. Where papers can be opened early for modification, this happens in time for the pupil to access the paper with all the other students taking the examination.*

Example 8: *A year 4 pupil with cerebral palsy attends a mainstream school. To communicate the pupil uses eye-pointing, a communication book, and a Tellus communication aid. She has recently progressed to using an eye-gaze system which enables her to communicate with a much greater degree of independence. The school has made a number of reasonable adjustments to facilitate her communication. She has three trained part-time teaching assistants (TA) so that there is always someone available who knows how she communicates. One TA with confidence in using ICT has been given responsibility to lead the team in using communication technology in the classroom with the support of outside agencies as outlined in her Education, Health and Care Plan.*

Transition to school was well managed with the TAs given opportunities for training off site before the pupil arrived. A whole school staff awareness raising session was held so that everyone who came into contact with the pupil would know how to communicate with her. The pupil's mother and her Speech and Language Therapist spoke about how to use her communication book, 'Look to Talk'. The school also encouraged the pupil's parents to talk to the school governors and to write an article about her way of communicating for all children and parents.

The outcome is that the pupil is very motivated, keen to be involved in school life and is able to communicate her views.

Specialist training, equipment and resources

Any specialist medical training school staff may require will be provided, monitored and supported by Oxfordshire's Shared Care Protocols for Children. The protocols support the care of children <S:\SEN Information\Shared Care protocol\SCP2012.doc> in any setting across disciplines and agencies in a safe and accountable manner.

The County Council works in partnership with the health services to provide a range of specialist aides, equipment and ICT to promote disabled pupils' access to the curriculum. We are committed to developing our partnerships with the health services and other agencies to seek opportunities for joint working and pooling of information and resources, to promote access to appropriate provision for pupils with disabilities. Our SEN Support Services (SENS) are instrumental in forging these links.

Example 9: *There is joint working between Occupational Therapists and the SENS specialist advisory teachers in providing specialist equipment to support access for children and young people with physical disability in mainstream settings. Specialist equipment that is not in educational use at any given time is stored alongside health equipment and is made available for home use through an equipment store.*

Example 10: *Health, social care and education funding is pooled for the provision of Communication aids. A specialist team within SENS, works closely with therapy colleagues and the ACE Centre to provide highly specialist multi-disciplinary assessment to inform provision of the most appropriate communication aid for each child. The communication aid is made available for use wherever the child is whether at school, out and about, or at home.*

Access to the extended curriculum, residential trips and short breaks

An extended school is one that aims to meet the wider needs of children, young people, their families and the local community by providing a range of activities and services in addition to the taught curriculum, often beyond the school day. The Equality Duties apply to the extended curriculum.

Example 11: *A primary school plans a school trip to a local history museum in their town. One of the pupils in the class is hearing impaired. When making her preliminary visit to the museum the class teacher takes the pupil's personal transmitter with her. This is to ensure that staff are familiar with the equipment and will use it during the tour and talks. They also arrange for a portable soundfield system to be set up in the education room of the museum to support access to the talks and her peers' oral contributions. The school allocates pre-teaching time prior to the trip to make sure that the pupil is aware of new vocabulary and whilst at the museum one member of staff takes notes for her so she can focus on listening. Although these steps involve additional staffing time the school considers that this is a reasonable adjustment to make given the substantial disadvantage faced by the disabled pupil if she cannot effectively access the learning on the trip.*

Example 12: *A disabled pupil requires assistance with personal care needs such as toileting, washing and dressing. This assistance is provided during the school day by his learning support assistant provided through his statement. The school arranges a residential school trip for his year group. The pupil wishes to attend but is not able to do so unless his personal care needs are met.
Applying the reasonable adjustments duties:*

Is he at a substantial disadvantage? *Yes, he is unable to attend the trip with his peers.*

Could the disadvantage be avoided? *The following options could avoid the disadvantage and enable the pupil to attend: asking his learning support*

assistant to go on the trip and provide support beyond the normal school day, liaising with social services to see if any support can be provided by them discussing with the pupil and his parents ways they think the support could be provided, such as a family member going on the trip to provide the overnight support.

Is it reasonable for the school to take these steps? *These steps are all potentially reasonable depending on the circumstances. If it is not possible for the school to find a reasonable means of enabling the pupil to attend then it should consider whether there is an alternative equivalent trip that could be organised for that year group that the disabled pupil would be able to participate in.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Example 13: After school club

A young person uses Sign Supported English to communicate. The school funds a Communication Support Worker who is a proficient signer for her to attend Duke of Edinburgh Award sessions after school. The support is partly used to develop effective peer group communication to allow the young person to be as independent as possible.

Short Breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to spend time away from their families and have fun. They also provide respite for families, giving them a break from their caring responsibilities, activities range from an hour to a week residential holiday. [Oxfordshire's short breaks statement](#) describes what is available.

5: Supporting children and young people to develop meaningful and reciprocal friendships

We know that it is VERY important for pupils with disabilities to be supported to develop meaningful and reciprocal friendships. It is within the scope of this strategy to highlight how, with some creative thinking; simple reasonable adjustments can be made to support this. These adjustments can make a very significant impact on disabled pupils' experience of school. The best way to do this is by listening to what children and young people say (see Listening Post exercise in Section2).

Some examples are given below:

Example 14: How teachers might get children to work in pairs/small groups in an inclusive way - Braille Club for sighted classmates.

The specialist teacher worked with the school to set up a Braille club. Children from the child's class were invited to take part over a 6 weeks course, in which the Braille alphabet and numbers were taught using games. The visually impaired child was actively involved in teaching the other children. This club was run twice as there was so much interest from the class. It has greatly improved the child's enthusiasm for Braille and the relationships to the other children in her class.

Example 15: Communication and Interaction

A year 7 and year 8 students with complex communication and interaction needs spend a lot of time in a learning base. Their tutors have each organized for small groups of their tutees to visit each student in the base at least once a day. The boys look forward to the visits and are learning to ask their visitors what they would like to do or play. Before Christmas, two girls brought over balloons and had a mini-party for anyone who wanted to join in. This relationship has the potential to develop further as the parents of the student and the girls are trying to arrange an out of school visit. Tutors provide positive feedback to students.

Example 16: Setting up learning experiences where there is an even playing field

A teacher manages the sound field system by having a “Roving reporter” – Children are given this responsibility for the day taking the handheld microphone around the classroom to gather children’s responses.

Using audio books rather than watching videos: A primary teacher used audio books with her class which included a pupil who was blind, rather than watching videos. This was very good listening practice for everyone.

A year 6 child with hearing impairment made a video with his peers in the playground to show how to include him in their conversations. He presented that to the whole school in a special event and then answered questions about his hearing impairment.

Children with Communication and Interaction difficulties do well in Forest school. It is an even playing field with child led play experiences. Children are relaxed, communicate well and express ideas with peers.

Example 17: Devising tasks where the person with the disability has a strength or advantage

Sensory activity involving smell rather than vision: An activity was organized in which items hidden in covered jars or boxes had to be sorted/matched by smell. This was great fun for everyone in the class and meant that the blind pupil could join in equally, and had an advantage.

Other practical ways to support children and young people to develop friendships

- A school cut out part of a picnic table to ensure the wheelchair user could have her picnic lunch at the same height as her friends.
- Coning off part of the playground so a pupil can take part in football without being too exhausted and unable to keep up.
- Taking the lunchtime support/nurture group outside encouraging children to join in and providing a managed level of social challenge rather than an inside sanctuary.
- Study Buddying provides opportunities for developing relationships and in turn can lead to friendships. Pairings need to be carefully considered and changed frequently, but given enough time to form a working relationship.
- Setting up clubs of interest, using positive discrimination to ensure that children are included. E.g. a six week block of football which only year 5 girls can attend so that a year 5 girl with physical disabilities who enjoys playing football can join in.

- Using apps in the playground e.g. gymnastics, when the PD pupil can't participate in 'handstand competitions'.
- The use of 'empathy' tasks whereby children get to experience what it can be like to have a barrier/difficulty, and how people can be supportive and inclusive when working with them.

6. Improving the physical environment

Oxfordshire has a long history of policy implementation to promote access for disabled pupils and there is a strong track record in making good quality provision for disabled pupils in our schools. We will continue to utilise capital funding, where available, to improve accessibility to school buildings by adapting them as required for individual disabled pupils.

Between 2001/02 and 2010/11 the County Council received a funding allocation from the DfE as part of the national 'Schools Access Initiative' (SAI) to improve the physical accessibility of schools. This funding allowed the Council to adopt a strategic approach to increasing physical access to our schools for disabled learners. The strategy focused on improvements to ensure that at least 1 secondary school and several feeder primary schools in each locality were fully accessible. The DfE ended the SAI programme in 2011/12 and the Council no longer receives specific capital funding to improve the accessibility of schools; as a consequence there has been no programme of works to improve the general accessibility of schools since 2011.

A large proportion of maintained schools were deemed to have a reasonable level of accessibility at the end of the SAI programme. All schools/academies have a general duty to ensure disabled pupils can be admitted therefore the emphasis will in the first instance be on managing use of buildings as opposed to adaptation.

It is recognised that there will continue to be the need for minor adaptations in schools to meet the needs of individual pupils. Since 2011/12 the Council has earmarked capital funding as part the annual budget setting process to support a programme of improvements to remove physical barriers for individual disabled learners in mainstream schools. To support this we have;

- Developed definitions of basic accessibility; and
- Identified which particular categories of work the County Council will provide/fund and which aspects schools and other responsible bodies will be responsible for, and those which require collaboration between the County Council, school and other responsible body. (See Annex A).

The recommended design standards for accessible provision in all schools are set out in the detailed design sections of the DfE Building Bulletins;

BB 102: *designing for disabled children and children with SEN*

BB 104: *'Area Guidelines for SEND and Alternative Provision'*

BB 93: *'Acoustic design for schools'*.

The Building Bulletins set out in more detail the requirements for each phase of education provision but the general principles for this are:

- Internal and external circulation routes as a basic requirement for accessibility;
- Sufficient accessible toilet provision to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities
- Access to specialist areas: PE (sports hall), science laboratory, D&T, ICT and any other unique specialist facility provided at that school;
- Access to general classrooms to be sufficient to timetable the curriculum. This may mean considering the management of space rather than adapting space to fit in with previously established practice, for example, using general teaching space for

different subjects from one academic year to the next or for pupils in a different year group to fit in with the requirements of the individual with the disability;

- Access to a quiet area or small group room;
- Access to recreation areas, sports fields and social spaces; and
- Access to extended school facilities.

Many schools already have a good level of accessibility through the delivery of the SAI rolling programme of adaptations; through adaptations previously carried out for individual disabled pupils and through new build extensions and refurbishments which will be fully accessible.

Where parental preference is expressed for a child to attend a school which is not yet regarded as accessible, we will investigate the adaptations required and work in partnership with schools and parents to identify an appropriate individual action plan which is compatible with parental preference and with the efficient use of resources.

Responsibility for Funding Adaptations

Increasing accessibility to school buildings is a partnership between the County Council and other providers to ensure that the needs of individual learners with disabilities are met. Since 2011, new providers of school places have been able to establish state-funded free schools, and now all new schools are deemed to be free schools. There are also a growing number of state funded schools that have converted to become academies, which are independent of local authority control. School places are no longer, therefore, solely provided or funded directly by the County Council and will include:

- Maintained Schools;
- Voluntary Controlled Schools;
- Voluntary Aided Schools;
- Academies/Free Schools (often part of a Multi Academy Trust);
- University Technical Colleges; and
- Studio Schools.

A schedule of works indicating where the County Council or school/provider is responsible for funding and implementing physical adaptations to buildings is included in Annex A

Schools will continue to be fully responsible for funding any adaptations required to comply with requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for the community hire of their premises. As a minimum, the adaptations should meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations and the British Standard 'code of practice' BS8300

Improving Physical Accessibility for Specific Needs

(a) Children and young people with hearing impairment

The improvement of the acoustic environment for children and young people with hearing impairment has benefits for all children and young people. Where resources permit, physical adaptations will be made to provide a quiet room for individual support work for children and young people with a significant hearing impairment. Similarly adaptations to improve acoustics in the child's classroom(s) and main assembly hall in primary settings will be put in place where reasonable and practical. Improving access to key curriculum areas and the main assembly hall will be a priority for secondary

settings. Use will be made of the BB93 guidance in determining acceptable levels of ambient noise and reverberation times. Adaptations may include the installation of false ceilings and sound-absorbing wall panels, provision of carpets, installation of a sound field system and provision of an FM system.

Classrooms and teaching areas within Hearing Impairment Resource Bases should have good acoustics and meet BB93 recommendations for use by hearing impaired children and young people. Where a school is co-located with a Resource Base the County Council has developed a system of working in partnership with host schools to ensure pupils with a hearing impairment also have access to the full curriculum, for example, by ensuring a suitable number of classrooms achieve the required acoustic conditions. Sound field systems are installed in key curriculum areas.

Example 18: *A severely deaf year 9 pupil wears two hearing aids and has difficulty hearing when levels of background noise increase. The school timetables the pupil so that she can make use of sound field systems installed in key subject areas. Staff are trained in how to use the equipment in conjunction with the pupil's radio system and the interactive whiteboard. Teachers plan ahead when they are using DVD or video clips to support learning and support staff arrange for a written synopsis or transcript when subtitled resources are not available.*

(b) Children and young people with visual Impairment

Where an environmental audit is needed to assess the physical accessibility of a school setting for a visually impaired child or young person; this will be carried out by a Visual Impairment Specialist from the [Sensory Impairment Team](#).

Recommendations are usually very specific to the individual child and setting and may, for example, include the painting of yellow lines to highlight trip hazards, changes to internal lighting, the addition of handrails or trails and Braille signage. The school is responsible for making these adaptations unless major building work is required.

Example 19: *A year 3 pupil with a visual impairment will be taught in a year 4 relocatable classroom from September. An environmental audit by the Visual Impairment Specialist from the Sensory Impairment Team took place in June and this determined that rails were needed on the set of steps at the entrance to the classroom. Yellow lines were also needed to guide the pupil across the playground from the main school entrance. The school arranged for the rails to be installed and the yellow lines to be painted during the school summer holiday.*

(c) Children and young people with physical disabilities

Adaptations to school buildings are often specific to the needs of the individual child and are usually recommended following an assessment by an Occupational Therapist in consultation with a SENSS specialist advisory teacher. Adaptations may include the installation of lifts, ramps, handrails, automated door openers, widening doorways, accessible toilet and changing facilities (including fixed hoists and changing beds). Adjustments may also be needed to a pupil's timetabling and room allocation so that accessible classrooms are available across the range of curriculum subjects.

Standards for the design of new accommodation now reflect the needs of those with physical disability and sensory disability.

Example 20: *A disabled pupil with ME finds moving around a large three storey*

secondary school very tiring, and despite the school adjusting the timetable and location of classes to minimise the amount she has to move around the school, she is still too exhausted to complete the school day. The school then makes further adjustments of having a 'buddy' to carry her books for her, a dictaphone to record those lessons which she misses and a policy that she will not be penalised for arriving at lessons late. These adjustments enable her to attend more lessons and to be less disadvantaged when she does miss lessons.

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Example 21: *A pupil who is a wheelchair user is unable to access classes on the first floor. A reasonable adjustment would be for the school to re-arrange the timetabling and location of classes so all of her classes are on the ground floor. Although this may be difficult it does not mean it is not a reasonable adjustment for the school to make. If specialist facilities such as science labs are only available on the first floor then it may not be possible to move classes which require use of the specialist equipment to a different classroom, in which case the school will need to consider what other adjustments it could make to enable the disabled pupil to access equivalent learning opportunities to her peers.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

(d) Children and young people with communication and interaction needs and those who need personalised learning approaches, including those with attention difficulties.

A variety of physical adaptations may be needed to facilitate full access to curriculum and learning opportunities, and to the social aspects of school life. Adaptations will vary and will need to be individualised to meet the particular needs of each child or young person. Children with autistic spectrum disorder have difficulty interpreting their surroundings and communicating and interacting with others. They need access to a calm, distraction free learning environment which is predictable and easily understood, as the reduction in sensory stimulus helps to reduce anxiety and distress (this will not always be possible for all lessons, but a quiet place could be made available as needed).

Children and young people who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive or disturbing others may need extra space/opportunities to move around and to ensure a comfortable distance between themselves and others. Some may take extreme risks or have outbursts and need a safe place to calm down.

Environmental adaptations may include the provision of an accessible, alternative teaching and learning space within the school to which children and young people can be withdrawn, or can withdraw themselves, should the classroom environment become overwhelming or present sensory challenges.

Presentation of school related information in a coherent visual format to support comprehension and retention of information can also help, for example, colour-coding the doors of subject teaching rooms in line with exercise books and timetables.

Planning for new accommodation and adaptations need to consider sensory sensitivity, space for personalised learning approaches and calm supportive environments.

Example 22: *A year 6 pupil with autism, anxiety and attachment disorder experienced significant difficulties with learning and coping in her mainstream school. Her level of anxiety was such that she had not used the toilet in school for some time. Enhanced input was given by SENSS to support her transition into*

secondary education. Following the advice of the autism advisory teacher, and with regular input from a learning mentor, the school worked diligently to make a range of adaptations to reduce her anxiety, e.g.

- Access to the disabled toilet;
- Staff always speak as calmly as possible, even in the most urgent/demanding situations;
- A colour-coded timetable (e.g. green for positive work and behavior) was created to provide visual reminders of good efforts/achievements.
- Homework was mainly allowed to be completed at school.

There has been a significant improvement in her well-being and social confidence. She now attends the after school film club and was very keen to go on a cinema outing. She has been interacting well with some of her peers, her social skills are improving and the focus is now on her academic targets. At the last review her mother was close to crying with relief and delight at how well she is doing.

7. Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils who require support accessing written information.

In today's modern society the provision of information is now accessed and available in a variety of printed, spoken and electronic forms. We believe in effective communication and therefore publish a range of guidance to support our strategies for promoting accessibility:

Large print

Written material should be produced in a minimum of 12 point and printed in a plain font. However, for some visually impaired colleagues and customers, this may not be sufficient. The Visual Impairment Support Service can give advice and support about producing accessible versions.

Easy Read

This format was originally developed for people with learning disabilities, but now has a wider user group. It uses large print with illustrations and can be supported by audio. The language is reduced in complexity and jargon. There are a range of Easy read pages on Oxfordshire County Council's website.



Braille and other Alternative Formats

Oxfordshire County Council services work in partnership with schools and other agencies to provide access for children with specific impairments or disabilities to a range of human, paper and electronic sources of information, including:

- Provision of specialist access equipment for pupils with severe communication difficulties including members of the Deaf community. This will include:
 - Text phones, and video telephone systems;
 - Certain information in video format requiring both subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL) sign interpreting services as well as live voice; and
 - Certain information access requiring the provision of BSL interpreting services across a number of levels for a range of information contact points.
- Access to provision via specialist access equipment for pupils with severe visual impairments e.g. Braille facilities, signage, talking/text reading facilities. In addition, certain information access will require the provision of audio tapes services across a number of levels for a range of information contact points; e.g. the circulation of public information.
- Access for pupils with severe sensory impairments to information via electronic media; internet/websites. This will include sign language translation/subtitles, large print and talking print versions.
- Access for pupils with severe sensory impairments to paper based published information e.g. large print and Braille, audiotapes video interpreting facilities.
- Access to information for disabled children when English is not their first language via translations into their preferred format.
- In addition there are a small number of children who will have both sensory impairments and English as an additional language. This group will require additional and specialist facilities and services which reflect a combination of the above strategies.

There is an interpretation service for Deaf people in Oxfordshire funded by the Health Service. It includes British Sign Language/English, Sign Supported English or similar for case conferences and home visits for any health needs (e.g. GPs, hospital appointments). Schools are expected to fund Interpreters for educational needs (e.g. parent/teacher meetings, school open evenings for students or parents who are sign language users).

The interpretation service can also advise staff on best formats for letters to people who use BSL as their first language, or video-letters.

SENSS will give initial and recurrent training and support schools to:

- Raise awareness of what the needs of this client group are;
- Inform them of existing Oxfordshire County Council and SEN Support Services, in relation to access and the provision of information; and
- Advise them on what adjustments need to be made to ensure full access to information for all, including information, advice and support to children, young people, parents and school about the use of ICT to support access to information.

Refer to the Local Offer, [Support Services for SEND](#) for more information about services available.

8. School Accessibility Plans

The Equality Act 2010 and Equality Duty 2011 placed responsibilities upon schools to remove discrimination against pupils with disability. It requires schools to make “reasonable adjustments” to their policies, procedures and practices to accommodate pupils with disability more fully in school life. There is a duty on schools to state what action they have taken to improve access and to have an Accessibility Plan.

A school’s duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one and therefore schools need to think in advance about what disabled pupils might require and what adjustments might need to be made for them.

School Accessibility Plans

An Accessibility Plan should aim to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can engage in the school **curriculum**;
- Improve the physical environment of schools to increase disabled pupils’ **physical access** to education and extra-curricular activities; and
- Improve the delivery of **information** to disabled children and young people, using formats which give better access to information.

The responsibility for the Accessibility Plan lies with the governing body and headteacher. The Local Authority provides advice on the production of access plans. Planning should start with the information that is already held by the school regarding the nature of the pupil population and the school’s strengths and weaknesses in ensuring access for disabled pupils. Contact Oxfordshire’s School Inclusion Team (OXSiT) for advice and support available: www.oxsit.org.uk

The first, critical step in developing an Accessibility Plan is for the whole school community to work through a process so that there is a clear and shared understanding of what inclusion means and looks like to everyone. Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team (OXSiT) has developed a PowerPoint about Accessibility Planning which could be used for a leadership/team or staff meeting, as well as a simple toolkit to support people’s understanding of ‘What inclusion looks like in our school’. It is strongly advised that all schools work through this process as part of their accessibility planning. The value of any Accessibility Plan will be undermined if there is not a whole school community understanding of inclusion.

A range of directorate staff is available to deliver training and to provide advice and support to schools. There are specialist courses for staff and governors. Further advice and guidance on drawing up an Accessibility Plan is also available on the Teachernet website.

The Ofsted framework strengthens the requirements relating to equality of access and narrowing the gap in achievement. Governors should report annually on the impact of their school’s arrangements for children with SEN and other vulnerabilities and progress made implementing the accessibility plan. Ofsted’s Common Inspection Framework 2015 states: ***‘Inspectors will assess the extent to which the school or provider complies with relevant legal duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, promotes equality of opportunity and takes positive steps to prevent any form of discrimination, either direct or indirect, against those with protected characteristics in all aspects of their work’.***

9. Implications for School Admissions

Our aim is for children with disabilities who are starting school to have a place in a suitably accessible, nearby, primary school which feeds into an accessible secondary school. This will enable such pupils to have an agreed pathway for their education. To support this aim, it is the County Council's policy to give a high priority for admission to disabled children at mainstream schools for which the Council is the admission authority. Our second over-subscription criterion is "Disabled children who need to be admitted to a school on the grounds of physical accessibility". This applies to 'community' and 'controlled' schools. Voluntary aided, foundation and trust schools and academies set their own entry criteria although many use the same criteria as those used by community and voluntary controlled schools.

We will identify disabled children at the pre-school and transfer stages and use this information to inform the allocation of their school places, in consultation with their parents. We will keep our admissions policy under review and amend this as appropriate to ensure on going compliance with the Act.

The School Admissions Code 2014 makes it clear that admission arrangements must not discriminate against, or disadvantage, disabled children. The School Admissions Code contains statutory guidance for admission authorities, governing bodies, local authorities, schools adjudicators and admission appeal panels. The funding agreements for academies ensure that academies also have to follow the School Admissions Code. Parents are able to challenge a decision to refuse to offer a place at a particular state funded mainstream school through an appeal to an independent admissions appeal panel.

10. Involving children, young people and their families in the development of the strategy

Oxfordshire is highly regarded in terms of participation and engagement with children, young people and their families. We have a well-established history of consultation with schools and the Dioceses, and will build on our existing work to comply with our equality duties.

Consultation took place with young people with disabilities on the formulation and development of the initial strategy. For the review all schools were offered the opportunity to either run their own Listening Post activity or have an externally facilitated activity run by our Engagement Officer. The information from these exercises, as well as other Listening Post activities, is strongly reflected in the revised strategy. A stakeholder event was held in November 2016 to gain feedback from a wide group of partners. Parent and carer representation was invited to be part of the event.

Throughout the development and review of school accessibility plans, young people continue to develop a powerful voice in advising teaching staff on how best to make reasonable adjustments for the benefit of pupils with disabilities.

On-going participation takes place through Children and Young People's Plan consultation mechanisms, including the Children and Young People's Survey and from individual responses and recommendations made during Annual Reviews of statements of Special Educational Needs and Education, Health and Care plans.

Some examples of participation and engagement of children and young people:

- Active participation by children and young people on the autism spectrum with the Oxfordshire Autism Board, including co-chairing.

- Involvement of the SENSS Childrens' Rights group in developing the online questionnaire for use in schools as part of the Anti-Bullying Strategy.
- The use by SENSS of an exit interview when children and young people leave school to inform future service developments.
- Therapists working with children and young people to develop leaflets for children and young people to describe what their therapy might involve.

11. How we will review the effectiveness of this strategy

We will review the effectiveness of this strategy using a variety of means including:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the SEN School Access Plans when carrying out SEND Reviews;
- Monitoring Social and Community Impact Assessments;
- Monitoring and evaluation undertaken as part of Oxfordshire County Council corporate systems for reviewing access and service provision;
- Feedback from parents/carers, and voluntary organisations;
- Feedback from children and young people;
- Monitoring complaints; and
- Monitoring the admissions to County Council maintained schools, as required by the Special Educational Needs (Provision of Information by LEAs) Regulations 2001.

ANNEX A – Funding for adaptations to buildings

Where alterations are required, the responsibility for implementing and funding the work will rest with the Council or the school/other responsible body or both, depending on the nature of the work.

Funds available to support adaptations in schools will be provided from a number of sources including funding made available by the County Council, other responsible bodies (e.g. Multi Academy Trusts) and individual school budgets.

Schools and responsible bodies will be expected to continue to improve access through repair and maintenance work that is undertaken in schools. They will also be expected to fund the provision of most specialist equipment and fittings e.g. ICT, specialist furniture, curtains, signage and other smaller items of work. In addition schools will be expected to pay the first £300 for each item of specialist equipment required by pupils with a disability.

Any financial contribution by the Council will be subject to agreement by the SEN case officer or appropriate County Council health practitioner. Typical adaptations to improve

accessibility that the school should be able to fund itself are identified in the table below. This list of adaptations is not exhaustive.

Typical Adaptations Required For Individual Disabled Pupils

Adaptation	Responsibility*
Ramps	OCC
Installation of lifts including building works	OCC
Create accessible toilets/changing areas	OCC
Install/replace doors to meet requirements for non-ambulant users	OCC
Automated door openers and electronic hold open devices	OCC
Installation of a number of grab rails and handrails over and above the needs of other building users	OCC
Drop kerbs	OCC
Acoustic improvement works such as false ceilings and wall boards	OCC
Installation of fixed equipment e.g. track hoist, height-adjustable bed, washer-dryer toilet	OCC
Provision of sound field systems	OCC
Provision of secure fencing to create a safe environment to prevent escape, on an exceptional basis only where there is a specific need over and above what would ordinarily be required for the school to comply with its safeguarding duties.	OCC
Repairs and maintenance (e.g. doors, floor surfaces etc)	School/Responsible Body
Install viewing panels at various heights to doors for increased visibility	School/Responsible Body
Replace door furniture or addition of high handles	School/Responsible Body
Adaptations to entrance matting/trip hazards/flush door detail	School/Responsible Body
Remove trip hazards on external circulation routes, such as uneven paving, pot holes and tree roots	School/Responsible Body
Replace car park line markings for disabled car park spaces	School/Responsible Body
Basic induction loop for a reception area	School/Responsible Body

Install audio link/call bell from main entrance door to reception area	School/Responsible Body
Visual and tactile warning signs for various requirements – To include Braille signs where required, position of visual indicators	School/Responsible Body
Redecorate wall/ceiling finishes with colour differentiated Schemes	School/Responsible Body
Improved signage throughout the site and buildings	School/Responsible Body
Use of appropriate lighting, blinds, whiteboards with matt finish	School/Responsible Body

*In all cases Schools/Responsible Bodies will be expected to fund low cost individual items

When schools and/or responsible bodies are undertaking their own building projects, the County Council will not provide any funding to support the cost of providing any of the above where they are required in order to meet statutory requirements to provide accessible facilities. (E.g. to comply with Building Regulations) or other relevant guidance (e.g. to meet recommendations in BB93/BB104).

اشكال بديلة لهذا المنشور موجودة حسب الطلب. هذه تشمل لغات مختلفة و الطبعة البارزة وطريقة بربل و اشربة كاست و اقراص الحاسوب او البريد الالكتروني.
Arabic

আপনি যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে এই পুস্তিকাটি বিকল্প ছাঁদে, যেমন, অন্য কোনও ভাষায়, বড় হরফে, ব্রেইলে, অডিও-ক্যাসেটে, কমপিউটারের ডিস্কে বা ইমেলের মাধ্যমে পেতে পারেন।

Bengali

“本刊物備有其他的格式可供索取。這些包括有其他語言版，大字版，盲人用版，錄音帶版，電腦磁碟版或電子郵件版。”

Chinese

प्रार्थना करने पर यह प्रकाशन दूसरे रूपों में प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। जिस में सम्मिलित है, दूसरी भाषाओं में, बड़े छापे में, ब्रेअल, सुनने की टेप पर, कम्प्यूटर की डिस्क पर या ई-मेल द्वारा।

Hindi

“ਇਹ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ। ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਛਾਪੇ ਤੇ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਵਿਚ, ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਟੇਪ ਤੇ, ਕੰਪਿਊਟਰ ਡਿਸਕ ਜਾਂ ਈ ਮੇਲ ਤੇ।”

Punjabi

“اس اشاعت کو متبادل اشكال میں درخواست کرنے پر حاصل کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ اس میں دوسری زبانیں، براپرٹ، بریل (جسے اندھے چھو کر پڑھ سکیں)، آڈیو کیسٹ، کمپیوٹر ڈسک یا ای میل شامل ہیں۔”

Urdu

Na życzenie publikacja jest dostępna w innych formatach. Do nich należą wersje w innych językach, drukowane dużą czcionką, alfabetem Braille'a, w wersji audio, na dysku komputerowym, lub jako email.

Polish

Alternative formats of this publication can be made available on request. These include other languages, large print, Braille, Easy Read, audio cassette, computer disk or email.

Schools Accessibility Strategy

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