

Accessibility Strategy

2009-2012

VISION

From the earliest years, we want every learner in Slough to have the opportunity to develop high self-esteem, respect for others and positive and socially responsible behaviour, enabling them to play a full, happy and active role in society. For children and young people with disabilities this means that:

- **our education providers have a responsibility to ensure that everyone in Slough can participate fully in any learning opportunity;**
- **there should be a continuum of provision to meet ongoing needs;**
- **there should be a continuum of provision to meet temporary/short term needs; and**
- **all children and young people should receive a high quality education that meets their needs in their local communities through varied and flexible provision.**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SCHOOLS?

The Local Authority believes that the following principles should guide educational provision for all learners, in all educational settings across the Borough:

- that our schools and colleges are learning communities with cultures that promote and support effective teaching with active and participative learning;
- that the ethos of all schools and colleges place a high value on developing self-esteem and ensuring that learning takes place in a stimulating, purposeful and creative environment;
- that the curriculum is broad, rich and innovative and is responsive to the different learning needs and styles of every child and young person so that it delivers their entitlement to appropriate education and training;
- that there is excellence in attainment and achievement, with high aspirations and an entitlement to good progress for all;
- that timely and appropriate information is shared and used between and within schools and other appropriate agencies to inform effective learning;
- that all children and young people are supported to overcome barriers to learning and that their learning moves at a challenging but realistic pace;
- that good behaviour is promoted and inappropriate/unacceptable behaviour is managed constructively; and
- that our schools work in close partnership with parents/carers, partners and the local community to ensure entitlement for all.

THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

The Disability Discrimination Act says that a person has a disability if he or she has 'a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. This includes anyone who has significant difficulties which have lasted or are likely to last more than a year.

Most children and young people who have special educational needs will also be disabled, but not all. Many children and young people who are disabled may also have special educational needs, but not all.

All local authorities must prepare an accessibility strategy for their schools. The strategy must be in writing. We have a duty to review, revise as necessary and put into practice the strategy. We must also set aside enough resources for introducing the strategy.

Each school is responsible for producing its own accessibility plan. Schools must review their strategies and plans, revise them if necessary, and put them into practice. Schools must set aside enough resources for putting their strategies and plans into practice. Schools must also report on their accessibility plans each year.

Local authorities and schools also have a duty to promote disability equality for their employees and service users, including children and young people in schools. We must:

- promote equal opportunities;
- prevent discrimination;
- prevent disability-related harassment;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- help disabled people to take part in public life; and
- take account of people's disabilities even where that involves more favourable treatment.

Local authorities and schools must publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and involve disabled people in developing it.

1 Increase access for disabled pupils to the school curriculum

This Strategy's curriculum targets are designed to address the needs of children and young people with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities and include the development of a range of academic and skills/training programmes by the Local Authority. The Local Authority in collaboration with schools will:

- review the joint policy for information sharing between agencies and update it where necessary;
- develop the use of the electronic common assessment framework;
- develop a referral system with specific guidelines governing the eligibility of key workers;
- make further developments to the training programme for statutory and partner agencies, children and young people, schools and extended schools;
- establish a single point of contact (lead professional) for children and young people and their families, to provide support in making choices and navigating their way through the referral system, via the Key Worker/Lead Professional training of the Early Support Programme;
- reshape our transition protocols and pathways to ensure effective transition planning and data sharing to inform planning with a reduced reliance on out of area provision;
- review, update and widely disseminate SEN guidance and procedures;
- introduce relevant and easily accessible information to enable all schools to improve the extent to which they are able to offer the broadest, most relevant curriculum opportunities to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and provide value for money;
- review outreach service provision across the Local Authority to determine whether this continues to be appropriate, provides relevant and purposeful support and is making a positive impact on inclusion and narrowing the SEN / non-SEN attainment gap;
- offer a range of extra-curricular and out of school activities by schools. The extent to which such activities are taken up by pupils with a disability will be monitored by the Aiming High for Disabled Children short break service and support to aid inclusion may be available through this service;
- disseminate the Inclusion Development Programme to schools and early years settings to support all staff in the development of skills and knowledge in the relevant areas. Phase 1 relates to children with dyslexia and speech, language and communication needs. Phase 2 relates to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Phase 3 relates to children with behavioural, emotional and social development needs. The Local Authority will evaluate the impact of this programme across the Authority;

- disseminate guidance to schools around what constitutes good progress for pupils with special educational needs to help inform their target setting processes;
- provide schools with a P level moderation scheme;
- continue to provide training, guidance and support to schools in the drawing up of provision maps; and link this to the Value for Money Resource Pack for Schools;
- conduct a review of the funding mechanisms for special/additional educational needs during the 2009/2010 financial year with school representatives. This will ultimately lead to a review of the Local Authority expectations on schools to provide support for pupils with special or additional educational needs and the criteria for a statutory assessment of special educational needs; and
- provide pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers, together with staff, partners and other school users with disabilities with the means and the opportunity to help shape and influence the development of services that are provided for them.

2 Improve access to the physical and sensory environment of schools

Physical environment targets are aimed at improving and making the best use of existing school buildings and outdoor facilities as well as making sound decisions in respect of new building projects for all school users. They are concerned with the systematic removal of all barriers to the physical environment of the school including physical access to the school and the provision of physical aids to access and improve the sensory environment for pupils and others with visual and hearing difficulties who may require a relatively distraction free environment.

The Local Authority in collaboration with schools will:

- continue to work with schools to use capital funding strategically to improve access across all schools in ways that:
 - take account of all the work already done to improve access;
 - ensure the broadest possible choice of accessible schools across the Borough;
 - ensure the availability of good, early information about pupils coming into the school system; and
 - ensure that work to improve accessibility is considered and improvements are built in to all new capital projects including Building Schools for the Future;
- continue to provide advice and guidance to schools on:
 - the use of their annual Developed Formula Capital allocations;
 - key improvements to the physical environment that schools should prioritise in their Accessibility Plans;
 - how building regulations apply to capital works;

- how to embed the development of accessibility in all building works whether small or large;
 - purchasing furniture and equipment to improve access;
 - developing staff capabilities to meet the needs of their pupils;
 - all reasonable alternative arrangements and adjustments to a school's physical environment prior to committing expenditure and in response to individual pupil needs;
- provide pupils with disabilities and their parents, together with staff, partners and other school users with disabilities with the means and the opportunity to help shape and influence the services and facilities that are provided for them;
 - update and share records of access improvements undertaken as part of schools Accessibility Plans and Disability Equality Schemes;
 - review and update the specifications used in the design of new school buildings to take account of the best possible standards of accessibility;
 - periodically update accessibility audits to evaluate the work still to be undertaken and to ensure accessible schools meet the current standards;
 - carry out anticipatory reception planning to ensure that building accessibility requirements in relation to future pupil profiles for pupils with Special Educational Needs or Learning Disabilities is identified and notified to the Local Authority at a sufficiently early enough opportunity to make a difference;
 - use individual School Accessibility Plans to inform the Local Authority's on-going prioritisation and budget allocations for improving the accessibility of schools.

3 Improve access to communication

The Local Authority aims to provide information to all school users including pupils, parents/carers and partners in suitable responsive formats wherever it is needed or requested. The Local Authority role is to assist schools to understand the implications of the requirements through training and guidance for Governors and senior managers on their planning duties and good practice in the implementation and sources of specialist information and assessment. The Local Authority will :

- offer guidance to schools to enable them to audit the number of pupils for whom alternative means of access to written information will be needed and to audit the types of information that fall within this duty;
- provide examples of good practice guidance, including:
 - advice on consideration of the implications of particular disabilities for gaining access to written information;
 - how to identify and meet the needs as far as possible of pupils with disabilities or their parent's/carer's preferences;
 - assistance in removing the barriers to the provision of information by alternative means;
 - technical advice and assistance in relation to providing information in modified written form or through alternative means;

- provide general support and guidance through local support services including:
 - Service for Children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities;
 - Sensory Consortium Service;
 - Educational Psychology Service;
 - Service for Autism;
 - Speech, Language and Communication Service;
- offer advice and information on the procurement of specialist advice and guidance.

Schools must ensure that they are proactive in ensuring that the fullest range of innovative communication methods are used including the use of technology, Braille, large print, British Sign Language, picture exchange systems, translation services or the use of visual timetables. This should include communication between school and home and reflect the requirement to provide information to disabled learners and their parents/carers:

- in a range of different formats;
- concerning different areas of the curriculum;
- in respect of the services provided by schools or provided by the Local Authority and partners in support of schools;
- concerning extracurricular activities including possible short break opportunities; and
- using interpreters where necessary particularly related to British Sign Language.

This may involve the school making individual arrangements to meet individual needs. The provision of accessible information in a variety of responsive formats is key to ensuring the active participation of the widest range of school users in the design and dissemination of effective school services. Schools should be encouraged to:

- review their existing systems for providing equipment and technical aids to ensure that the most effective provision and use of the equipment, ICT and technical devices are provided;
- monitor and regularly review the skills and expertise of the whole school workforce, their role in supporting pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers, partners and other school users as part of their Disability Equality Schemes;
- monitor, review and share data on the uptake of training opportunities by the whole school workforce to raise their awareness of DDA and to support their communication and involvement with pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers, partners and other school users as part of their Disability Equality Schemes;
- carry out targeted training for particular groups of staff to support their communication and involvement with pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers, partners and other school users as part of their Disability Equality Schemes;

- train staff to create and design communications that are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the widest range of school users as possible;
- ensure that pupils with disabilities, their parents/carers, partners and other school users are fully involved in the decision making processes with regard to individual learning and whole school provision where applicable;
- ensure that pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers are fully involved in the development of and are better informed about the availability of literature produced to support the schools accessibility agenda, the Disability Equality Scheme and the Local Authority's inclusion policy;
- ensure that pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers are provided with information in relation to the SEN Code of Practice including information about School Action and School Action Plus as required in accordance with statutory duties; and
- ensure that pupils with disabilities and their parents/carers are aware of the Slough SEN practices and procedures handbook, Slough's Children and Young People's Directory¹, the Special Needs Information for People in Slough (SNIPS) handbook² and the Council's Accessibility website.

The Accessibility of this Strategy

The full version of the Strategy will be published to schools via the schools communication process. Each school and its governing body and all agencies, services and partnerships who contributed to its development will receive a copy.

The full Strategy will be placed on the Council website for public accessibility.

If you need further copies of this document or would like the full Strategy or this document in another format, such as enlarged print, Braille, audio tape or another language, please contact the Service for Children with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities on 01753 787630.

¹ www.sloughcypdirectory.org.uk/kbroker/berkshire/sloughcsd/start.jsp

² www.slough.gov.uk/services/16750.aspx