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# Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have access to the curriculum and to the physical environment. Improving access to education is vital to improving inclusion within mainstream schools, ensuring equality of opportunity, ensuring access to employment opportunities and in ensuring that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have every opportunity to achieve their full potential. There is a wide range of provision available in South Gloucestershire for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The local authority works in partnership with schools to ensure that provision is relevant and responsive to needs. Special schools have strong links with mainstream schools to promote inclusion. Specialist services and outreach providers from special schools are flexible in their approach to ensure that all pupils enjoy full participation. This strategy is for headteachers, governors, parents/carers, professionals and members of the local community. It should inform individual School Access Plans developed with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and implemented by each school. This accessibility strategy applies to local authority maintained schools, nurseries and children's centres. In legal terms it does not apply to academies. Owners/governing bodies of such provisions must produce their own accessibility strategy in accordance with the Equality Act.

## Definition

A person is disabled if they have "a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities". A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language and communication impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or people diagnosed with cancer, HIV infection or multiple sclerosis (Equality Act 2010). An impairment does not of 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.

## Legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 introduced new duties on local authorities and schools. The Equality Act 2010 brought together and simplified existing equality legislation and also introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to public bodies including maintained schools, academies and free schools. With regard to the planning duty for disabled pupils, three strands are identified as requirements for an accessibility strategy and accessibility plans. It is a strategy/plan for:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum
- improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils

who are not disabled.

Local authorities and schools have had a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils since 2002. This was initially 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 favourably for a reason related to their disability
- to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage
- to publish and implement an 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 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. These duties apply to disabled pupils, as defined in the Equality Act 2010. 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
- 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 provision or have a statement of SEN or Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Just because a disabled pupil has SEN or has a statement or EHCP 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/EHCP 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. Also, some children have medical needs and do not have a statement of Special Educational Needs or Education Health Care plan and these may require adjustments to meet those needs' in line with the council's Medical Needs Policy.

# The local context

South Gloucestershire stretches from the Severn Estuary in the west to the Cotswolds in the east. Its southern boundary borders Bristol and extends almost to Bath. It has a 0-19 population of around 63,300, about a quarter of the total population. The population is concentrated in the urban areas surrounding the north and east of the City of Bristol. It has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country and the 0-19 population is projected to increase steadily over the next 20 years to around 75,000. In general there is a low level of deprivation across South Gloucestershire. However, a higher percentage of families live by 'moderate means' than nationally and the recent downturn in the economy is likely to have adversely affected many low to moderate income families.

## Vision

South Gloucestershire is a place where all children and young people enjoy a safe and healthy life, achieve their maximum potential and thrive in their community. We will ensure children, young people and their families are provided with integrated, accessible and equitable services which are designed to target early intervention and support on disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people and their families; be flexible and user-friendly and involve children, young people and their families and put children, young people and families at the heart of what we do. In accordance with this vision, we want them to:

- feel safe and be protected from harm
- enjoy the best possible physical and mental health and live a healthy lifestyle
- have every opportunity to achieve their full potential, whoever they are
- wherever they are from and whatever their family circumstances
- feel a valued and respected part of the wider community and make a positive contribution to it
- take responsibility, where appropriate, for their own lives.

## Strategic priorities

# The Children, Young People and Families Partnership Strategy 2016 -2020

The Children, Young People and Families Partnership Strategy is the overarching four year plan for all services which affect children, young people and families across South Gloucestershire. The plan builds on the existing strong leadership to create a shared focus and ambition across all public sector partners and voluntary partners, supported by shared outcomes and joint programmes. The strategic plan sets out how the council, with its strategic partners, intends to focus on our priority areas for improvement with specific reference to improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and

young people and arrangements for early help and intervention. Within this it focuses on priorities for joint action, one of which include children and young people with special educational needs including those with disabilities. Information tells us that children and young people with special educational needs including those with a disability often face barriers to wellbeing and good future prospects. It is vitally important that children with disabilities and special educational needs have access to opportunities and choices that help them achieve their potential and those services are more personalised. We need to ensure that the needs of children and young people with additional needs are met and that local services can flex to meet these needs. The strategy identifies what success looks like if all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have access to opportunities and choices that can help them to achieve their potential.

## Co-producing our SEND Strategy

Through the work we have done so far and listening to people's views:

- we are gaining a better understanding of the challenges and priorities for everyone involved in this important work
- we know that working collaboratively is vital.

Get involved in [developing our SEND strategy](#).

## Integrated 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Service

To support the implementation of the wide ranging reforms in the Children and Families Act 2014, associated regulations and the requirements of the revised Code of Practice July 2014, South Gloucestershire Council established a new integrated 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Service. The service is designed to deliver joined up working across education, health and social care for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25. The service's responsibilities include jointly commissioning services and resourcing specialist provision in mainstream and special schools and the development of a Local Offer. The Local Offer ensures better access to information, and advice and support for parent carers, children and young people as well as practitioners working in the field, and the personalisation agenda that puts children and young people and their families at the heart of the decision making process.

### a.) Access to Curriculum

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils, including for disabled pupils. The local authority and its partners support schools to respond to individual needs of pupils and training needs of staff with a range of specialist services, commissioned services and traded services as follows:

- School improvement in South Gloucestershire

Provides support to maintained schools as part of the Universal Offer. The service is available to all

phases and settings, whether mainstream, academies or special schools and includes:

- Support in preparation for Ofsted inspection
- Advice and support in the development of guidance relating to policies such as SEND policies.
- Educational Psychology Service and School Inclusion

This service aims to promote improved attainment, inclusion and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Gloucestershire. The service also has targeted and specialist functions and delivers services principally through visits to schools and settings. A significant amount of time is spent working in a multi-agency context, in the early identification of pre-school children, who may have additional or special educational needs. Work in schools will focus on early intervention, removing barriers to learning, building capacity in schools and raising expectations and achievement. The service is delivered principally through consultation with school staff, parents, pupils and other services and agencies, to help address and support the concerns raised. It is accessible to users independently of schools and the service operates within the [Council's Equality and Diversity Policy](#). Increasingly, educational psychologists will work in schools to help deliver integrated support to children and young people with additional needs via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

- Sensory Support Service
- Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service (part of 0-25 service)

This service enables individual pupils with a range of needs to access the curriculum with specialist advisory teacher support and inclusion support workers. The team also delivers training to schools to ensure improved participation for all pupils is achieved from a whole school approach. (vi) Speech and Language Therapy Service The Children's Speech and Language and Therapy Service provides an assessment, diagnosis and intervention service to children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and/or with eating drinking and swallowing difficulties. (vii) Outreach Support The local authority commissions outreach support for pupils in mainstream schools, with a range of special educational needs and disabilities to ensure greater access to the curriculum. The council provides support to schools to help them implement their accessibility plans. This includes:

- providing training and awareness opportunities to staff, governors and parents
- sharing good practice and teaching support
- subject specific guidance
- encouraging collaboration between groups of schools to share expertise
- ensuring that schools are aware of support services that provide advice to schools and staff
- providing specialist help to identify ways forward in increasing the inclusion of all pupils.

The Inclusion Handbook for schools contains detailed guidance on removing barriers to achievement and improving participation in the curriculum together with guidance on the Equality Duties. As we gain momentum in the implementation phase of the reform agenda the council will continue to support our schools to work together and with parent carers to ensure our specialist and outreach services are designed to maximise inclusion.

## Specialist training, equipment and resources

The council works in partnership with 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 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.

## Access to the school day, to the extended curriculum and short breaks

The normal school day is determined by the school governors and the headteacher and as far as possible all children should be enabled to have access to that full provision. 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.

### b.) Access to the environment

Investment to improve the accessibility of our schools has been sustained at varying levels over the course of two decades. In previous years priority work focused on the physical access to central facilities and teaching accommodation as well as the provision of any specialist facilities such as toilets. The initial strategy developed a range of barrier free mainstream schools in each locality across South Gloucestershire and targeted investment in our special schools and specialist resource bases. Many of our schools now have a high level of accessibility. Schools will continue to be responsible for 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. All schools should complete an annual self-audit questionnaire designed to assess the current accessibility of their premises. A capital budget continues to be available to help secure minor access improvements to existing provision and these are often secured in conjunction with other priority works on school site resulting in an overall cost benefit. The council's capital programme includes the provision of new schools and additional accommodation all of which comply with the legislative and regulative framework governing the accessibility of school buildings. Designs are also developed in consultation with specialists to ensure that all facilities are fully inclusive learning environments. The current capital programme is supporting significant investment in our special schools as determined by the council's SEN Places Strategy. The council is committed to developing a range of provision and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

## Definition of basic accessibility

The minimum requirements for accessible provision in all schools are set out in the DfE publication Building Bulletin 102 'Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs' and Building Bulletin 93 'Acoustic design for schools'. These bulletins set out in more detail the requirements for each phase of education provision but the general principles for this are:

- circulation routes as a basic requirement for accessibility

- sufficient accessible toilet provision to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities with a minimum of one centrally situated accessible toilet and changing provision
- 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
- access to extended school facilities.

## 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 risk. 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 disabled 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.

## 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 disabilities 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. 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
- 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. 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. Further advice and guidance on drawing up an Accessibility Plan is also available on the Teachernet website. **c.) Access to Information** Families will have access to good quality information about the range of services offered. The duty placed on local authorities in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer is a strategy to simplify and make more accessible information about processes, systems and services that support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. In South Gloucestershire the '[Local offer](#)' continually develops to provide clear and accessible information in one place. When the public or professionals need to make a referral or raise a concern about a child, the Access and Response Team (ART), will make the first assessment of what needs to be done to keep or make the child safe. The use of IT is significantly transforming the lives of everybody but especially those children and young people who have difficulty in communicating using traditional methods. Schools have made good progress in providing information in alternative forms and publishing details electronically, which enhances communication with all parent carers, young people and children

### How will we review the effectiveness of this strategy?

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

- reviewing the number of schools that meet the minimum standards for accessibility
- monitoring the effectiveness of the council's strategic plans
- ensuring that at phase transfers children with physical and sensory disabilities are able to transfer to appropriately adapted local schools
- taking account of feedback from parents/carers, and voluntary organisations, children and young.