

City of London Corporation

Access for all

**Accessibility strategy for children and young
people with special educational needs or
disabilities**

2018 to 2021



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1 Introduction

Our overall aim is to help schools to meet the needs of pupils with special education needs or disabilities by increasing their accomplishments and making them feel welcome.

The purpose of this strategy is to make sure that the accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information is a major consideration when providing services, and to help schools with their accessibility plans.

2 Our vision

This strategy builds on our vision for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, which is as follows.

'Our vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is that the City of London is a place where children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities, mental health conditions or other long-term medical conditions can thrive and experience a smooth progression into adulthood. We want our children and young people to be confident that they are highly valued, equal to all of their peers, and have high expectations for their futures.'

3 Scope and main aims of this strategy

This strategy sets out our plan to improve the access of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities to education in Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School (the school). The school should take account of this strategy when drawing up their own accessibility plans.

This strategy is also relevant to academies, free schools and other education settings not maintained by us, as they also have a legal duty to publish an accessibility plan.

The main aims

The main aims of this strategy are as follows.

- 1 To make sure that all pupils, whatever their needs, have access to the full range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 2 To continue to improve the physical environment of schools to make sure that, wherever possible, accessibility is not an issue that prevents

pupils from attending the school (including extra-curricular activities and holiday play schemes).

- 3 To make sure that all information provided by the school is easily accessible and regularly made available to all pupils, parents, staff and visitors with disabilities, using alternative formats and providing support where necessary.
- 4 To make sure that the process for offering school places, and places with other education providers, is fair and allows pupils with special educational needs or disabilities to receive a high-quality education that meets their needs.

4 The national and legal context

Introduction

The Equality Act 2010, which replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, is the main law covering the rights of children and young people with disabilities. The additional rights and responsibilities set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 also apply. That act aims to make sure that all children and young people, and their families, can get the right support and service to meet their needs. The act sets out a new code of practice for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (the SEND Code of Practice).

The 2011 government white paper, 'Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disabilities' set out the first major reforms of the SEND system for 30 years.

The reforms that were incorporated in the Children and Families Act included the following.

- Replacing statements of special educational needs with EHC (education, health and care) plans, which are based on a single assessment process. EHC plans support children and young people, and their families, from birth to 25.
- The need for services for children, young people and their families to be planned and provided jointly by health services and local authorities.
- Extending the rights to a personal budget for supporting children, young people and their families.
- The need for information on local services for children and families to be made available in a clear and easy-to-read format.
- The need for local authorities to involve families and children in discussions and decisions relating to their care and education, and to provide impartial advice, support and mediation services.

a **The Equality Act 2010**

Under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, local authorities and schools must produce accessibility plans. The Equality Act also sets out the legal obligations that schools, early years providers, post-16 institutions, local authorities and others have towards disabled children and young people.

- They **must not** directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children and young people.
- They **must** protect disabled pupils from discrimination and harassment and encourage good relations between disabled and non-disabled peers.
- They **must** make reasonable adjustments, including providing aids, adaptations and services, to make sure that pupils with disabilities are not put at a substantial disadvantage.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments

This is the duty that schools and other education providers have, under schedule 13 of the Equality Act 2010, to take reasonable steps to avoid substantial disadvantage that could otherwise be caused to a disabled person by:

- a condition, rule, policy or practice applied by or on behalf of a school; or
- a necessary aid, adaptation or service not being provided.

The duty aims to make sure that students with disabilities can enjoy the benefits, facilities and services provided for all students.

The duty is met when reasonable adjustments prevent students with disabilities from being at a substantial disadvantage. Guidance for education providers is available on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website at (www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/reasonable-adjustments-disabled-pupils).

Another aspect of the duty to make reasonable adjustments relates to the physical features of a location. This aspect does not apply to schools in relation to disabled pupils. Instead schools have a duty in general to plan better access for disabled pupils, including in relation to the physical features of the school.

Concerning aids, adaptations and services for disabled pupils, the reasonable adjustments that schools are already making for disabled pupils include coloured overlays for dyslexic pupils, pen grips, adapted PE equipment, adapted keyboards and specialised computer software.

Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and will often involve a change in practice rather than providing expensive equipment or extra staff.

Planning for reasonable adjustments

Schools need to think about what disabled pupils might need and what adjustments might need to be made for them. There is more information about the Equality Act and reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils in the appendix at the end of this strategy.

b The Children and Families Act 2014

This act introduced changes to the way we work, emphasising 'co-production', which means that we must involve children, young people and their parents or carers in developing services as a whole and those specific services and packages we put in place to meet a pupil's individual needs. We must also work with colleagues from other services and the local community (called a 'multi-agency approach') to:

- identify special educational needs and disabilities;
- assess special educational needs and disabilities, and tell parents and carers the results of their child's assessment; and
- make sure pupils' needs are met and that this improves outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

The multi-agency approach to planning and providing education, health and care services for children and young people should lead to more integrated packages of support, which will allow children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities to make the best progress possible.

All schools must provide a 'broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. Schools should work with parents, carers, children and young people to develop support for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. Schools must work with parents, carers, children and young people to identify appropriate outcomes to be included in their personalised plans.

SEN information report

All schools should keep to this accessibility strategy. The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 (2015) states that a school must produce a SEN information report that gives a detailed description of the reasonable adjustments it has made. The report must be published on the school's website.

Accessibility plan

All schools must publish their own accessibility plan. The accessibility plan should be part of, or an appendix to, the SEN information report. Ofsted may ask to see a school's accessibility plan as part of their inspection.

Admissions

The SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 emphasises that education providers' admissions policies must not discriminate. It states that: 'The Equality Act 2010 prohibits schools from discriminating against disabled children and young people in respect of admissions for a reason related to their disability. Where a child or young person has SEN but does not have an Education Health and Care plan they must be educated in a mainstream setting except in specific circumstances set out in the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25'.

5 The local context

We have only one maintained primary school in the City of London, Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School. It is an inclusive school that works closely with us to improve provision for pupils with disabilities. We also work closely with early years providers, the City Academies Trust, independent schools, and schools in neighbouring boroughs that our residents go to. We also support SENCOs in all schools in the City to improve their provision for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

The social model of disability

(www.scope.org.uk/about-us/our-brand/social-model-of-disability)

We support the 'social model' of disability, which says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.

An example of the way the social model works is that if a wheelchair user wants to enter a building with steps at the entrance, the problem is with the building, not the person.

Disabled people developed the social model of disability because the traditional medical model, which considers what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs, did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to remove barriers in order to create equality. It offers disabled people more independence, choice and control.

The social model recognises that removing barriers is as much about encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour as it is about removing physical

barriers. When developing this strategy, we took account of the fact that the world is changing rapidly and that social interaction, teaching and learning, and information, goods and resources are increasingly accessed electronically. Our hope is that the technological revolution, together with other developments, will increasingly remove barriers experienced by children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

We are committed to removing barriers that restrict choices for disabled people. When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

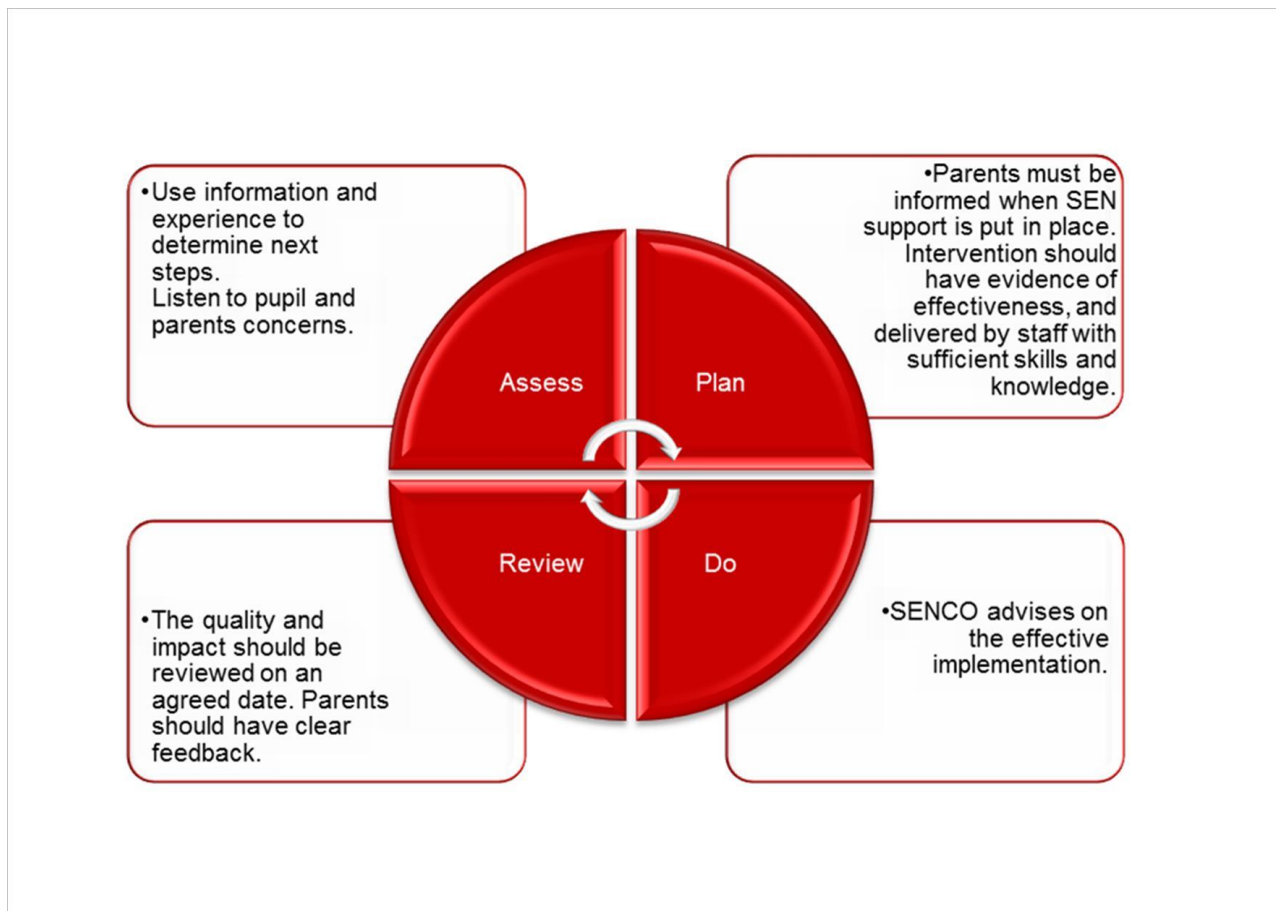
Access to learning should not be restricted by a pupil's disability. Improving accessibility for disabled pupils by providing education in a flexible way can give disabled pupils a positive experience of the education system, reduce inequalities in educational outcomes, and improve prospects. Schools have a great opportunity to help shape disabled pupils' futures.

The 'expected provision' statement

We have worked with schools, parents and carers to produce the 'expected provision statement', which sets out what schools need to put in place to make sure pupils with special educational needs or disabilities have full access to school life. The things schools must have in place include:

- a high-quality teaching and learning environment; and
- a structured and graduated approach to assessment, planning and reviewing SEN provision (see the diagram below, which is taken from the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 (2015)).

The graduated approach



For disabled pupils to achieve their educational potential they need an education that prepares them for an active and fulfilling life, whether through mainstream education, with or without additional support, or through specialist provision. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced Education, Health and Care Plans (replacing statements of special educational needs) for children with the most complex special educational needs. These plans will move with the child through school and into further education.

This accessibility strategy is in line with our Special Educational Needs and Disability Joint Strategy 2017-2020. This includes six priorities, which are:

- identifying needs early;
- effectively assessing and meeting needs;
- protecting children from harm and supporting independence;
- removing barriers to participation;
- creating smooth transitions between stages and services; and
- improving long-term outcomes and creating area-wide impact.

6 The main priorities of this strategy

a Increasing access to the curriculum

When considering how to improve access to the curriculum, schools should look not only at specific curriculum subjects (such as English, maths, languages, sciences, music and PE), but also at any other services provided on school premises. These might include other teaching and learning activities, school trips, visits, school events, breakfast clubs, after-school clubs, sports activities and so on.

What is the 'curriculum'?

The school curriculum sets out all learning and other experiences that each school plans for its pupils. The national curriculum forms part of a school's curriculum.

Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is:

- broad (that is, offers students a range of learning opportunities to meet their interests and aspirations);
- balanced (that is, includes both academic and vocational subjects and opportunities to develop social skills and support their physical and mental well-being); and
- accessible (that is, learning activities are planned so that all students can participate and learn effectively).

The curriculum must:

- promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and society; and
- prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

School-to-school support and advice

All schools in the City, including independent schools and academies, are encouraged to share good practice. We have an educational psychologist and an Area SENCO who give schools and other education settings advice on how to meet the needs of disabled pupils and make the curriculum more accessible.

We help schools to make effective use of the pupil premium (extra funding for publicly funded schools in England, used to improve the achievements of disadvantaged pupils and to close the gaps between them and their peers) and other funding in order to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

b Increasing access to the physical environment

A school's physical environment includes all aspects of the environment that affect children's physical well-being (health, exercise, safety and

mobility). If a school's environment is inaccessible, this can cause problems for disabled pupils. Examples include steps, stairs, signs, lack of colour contrast. Children who have sensory difficulties or sensitivities may need other environmental adaptations, such as access to quiet areas or early release from lessons. Schools can meet the needs of disabled people and pupils with special educational needs by making sure that the physical environment and facilities are accessible to all.

Good accessibility benefits everyone, including those who do not consider themselves to be disabled. Accessible schools, inside and outside, help all pupils to learn and play independently. This will also benefit any parent or carer who uses a wheelchair or has a baby in a pram.

All new school buildings must meet current building regulations and be physically accessible to pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.

Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School has its own [accessibility plan](#) in place and can apply for small grants from us to make sure that the school is as accessible as possible.

c Improving access to information

Written information normally provided to pupils must also be available to pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. The information should take account of pupils' disabilities and preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time. The information might include handouts, timetables and other visual information about school events. Schools might consider providing the information in alternative formats such as large print and audio versions.

We are constantly improving access to information for children and young people with disabilities, and their families. We aim to write information in plain English so that it is easy to read and everyone can understand it. The accessibility statement action plan ([link](#)) sets out what we have done to make sure that all information for schools, parents and pupils is accessible for all.

7 Engagement and consultation

The SEND Local Offer

The SEND Local Offer is a free and impartial website which we provide to help people identify services that are available to children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

We have produced the SEND Local Offer with children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities and their families.

Information Advice and Support Service (IASS)

We work with the Tower Hamlets Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) to provide impartial advice and support to families of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities, and young people themselves. IASS offers a range of support tailored to the needs of parents and carers, including, where necessary, accompanying parents to meetings. You can get more information at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/parental_support/parents_advice_centre_pac.aspx.

Accessibility of this strategy

This strategy will be made available to all schools, other interested groups and the general public in an accessible form. 'Easy read' and a summary will also be available. All documents will be available on the SEND Local Offer.

Reviewing this strategy

We will review this strategy as required by law, and update it, with the help of our Parent Carers Forum, young people and the local community, when necessary. We have systems in place to monitor and evaluate this strategy.

We would like your comments on this strategy and welcome suggestions for improving it and good practice. Please send any comments and suggestions to Fyi@cityoflondon.gov.uk.

The legal framework

The Equality Act 2010

This Act brought together a range of existing equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or ‘‘general duty’’; this applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies; Free Schools etc. It covers all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

The duty has three main parts. In carrying out their functions, public bodies (including educational settings) are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Equality Act 2010 (c. 15), - Part 6 of the Act applies to education

Chapter 2 applies to further and higher education: the responsible body must not discriminate against or victimise a student with SEND in respect of admissions/enrolment, treatment as a student enrolled on a course, or awarding of a qualification. They are required to make reasonable adjustments. This covers: (a) a course of further or higher education secured by a responsible body in England or Wales; (b) a course of education provided by the governing body of a maintained school under section 80 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in Schedule 10 of the Act: Accessibility for disabled pupils. Schedule 10 says:

An accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period—

- (a) increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum;
- (b) improving the physical environment of the schools 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 schools;
- (c) improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of information in (c) must be:

- (a) within a reasonable time;

(b) in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.
2010 Equality Act

More information on reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils can be found at: <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/disabled-children-and-equality-act-2010-schools> and https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/reasonable_adjustments_for_disabled_pupils_1.pdf; and for early years settings at <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/help-resources/resources/disabled-children-and-equality-act-2010-early-years>.

The Children and Families Act 2014

This Act introduced changes to the way we work, with an emphasis on co-production – we must involve children, young people and their parents or carers in joint development of services as a whole and those specific services and packages that we put in place to meet an individual's needs. We have a duty to work within a multi-agency approach to identify special educational needs or disability (SEND); assess SEND; ensure that those needs are met and that this improves outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The Act secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled people.

Definition of Disability

Under the 2010 Equality Act, 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 do 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 and speech, language and communication impairments.

This definition provides a relatively low threshold. The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means 'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'.

- 'Substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.
- 'Long term' means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months, or is likely to do so.

- 'Normal day to day activities' could be determined by reference to the illustrative, non-exhaustive list of factors in pages 47 to 51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. (Study and education related activities are included in the meaning of 'day to day' activities).

The definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer; it is not just restricted to those children with an Education Health and Care Plan.

Children and young people with long term health conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision, they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

More information about the definition of disability and other aspects of the disability equality duties can be found in the statutory guidance at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf.

Definition of special educational needs (SEN)

A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is likely to meet the definition above when of compulsory school age (or would be likely, if no special educational provision were made) (Children and Families Act 2014).

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Action plan

Appendix 2 – Supporting pupils with medical conditions

Appendix 3 – Identifying barriers to access: a checklist

Appendix 4 – Useful resources and links for improving accessibility