

The Blue School

(Church of England)

Established 1630



**Excellence for all,
Excellence by all
Through the guidance of
Jesus Christ
Our Living Lord**

Policy: Accessibility Policy

Co-ordinator: Elaine Lacey

Ratified: November 2015

Reviewed: Autumn 2017

The Blue School Accessibility Policy

Introduction

1. At The Blue School we have a total commitment to the equality and the inclusion of all pupils and staff in the life of the school. This is reflected in and re-enforced by the Christian ethos of the school. We ensure that all pupils, our staff and members of the school's wider community are provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and value diversity present within the school. The abilities and needs of all members of the school community are valued and everyone is treated with respect and consideration.

Disability

2. "A person suffers 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". Physical or mental impairments can include sensory impairments, i.e. those affecting an individual's sight and hearing, and/or particular learning difficulties. The definition also covers certain medical conditions when they have a long-term and substantial effect on pupils' everyday lives and their capacity to learn and progress at an appropriate pace.

Equality Act 2010

3. The Equality Act 2010 (EA2010) replaced **all** previous equality legislation such as the previous Race Relations Act, the Disability Discrimination Act, the Special Education Needs & Disability Act (SENDA) and the Sex Discrimination Act. It also provides some changes about which schools need to be aware.
4. The EA2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.
5. As far as schools are concerned, for the most part, the effect of the revised legislation set out in the EA2010 is the same as it has been in the past – meaning that schools – like all other public and private institutions - cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Protection is now extended to pupils who are pregnant or undergoing gender reassignment. However, schools that are already complying with the law should not find major differences in what they need to do.
6. The exceptions to the discrimination provisions for schools that existed under previous legislation – such as the content of the curriculum, collective worship and admissions to single-sex schools and schools of a religious character, are all replicated in the new act. However, there are some changes that will have an impact on schools as follows (those that are relevant to a primary school like the Blue School are reproduced below):

- a) Introduction of a new single equality duty to replace the previous three separate duties around equality. This includes new specific duties which are less bureaucratic and more light-touch than the previous duties, requiring schools to publish equality information and objectives. Initially this had to be done by 5 April 2012, and then periodically updated thereafter (chapter 5 of the guidance accompanying the Equality Act gives full details – this is available at: <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/equality%20act%20guidance%20february%202013.pdf>).
- b) It is now unlawful for employers to ask health-related questions of applicants before job offer, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work. This means that schools should no longer, as a matter of course, require job applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire as part of the application procedure. Schools are advised to review their existing practices to ensure they are complying with both the Health Standards Regulations and Section 60 of the EA2010.
- c) It is now unlawful to discriminate against a transgender pupil.
- d) It remains unlawful for schools and local education authorities (LEAs – now more commonly known now as local authorities – LAs) to discriminate against pupils in their admissions and exclusions, education and associated services
- e) New Positive Action provisions will allow schools to target measures that are designed to alleviate disadvantages experienced by, or to meet the particular needs of, pupils with particular protected characteristics. Such measures will need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim – for example providing special catch-up classes for vulnerable children or a project to engage specifically with specific vulnerable groups.
- f) Extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils. Following the recent consultation on implementation and approach, this duty was introduced in September 2012.

Enhanced Duties on Schools

7. The EA2010 places the following specific requirements on the school:

- a) Where a provision, criterion or practice of the school puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage
- b) Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the school to take such step as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage. This would include removing the physical feature in question, altering it or providing a reasonable means of avoiding it. The feature may arise from the design or construction of the building, from a feature of an approach to, exit from or access to the building, fixture or fitting or furniture, materials, equipment or other chattels, in or on the premises; or any other physical element or quality.

- c) Where a disabled person would, but for provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the school to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid.
- d) Where the first or third requirement relates to the provision of information, the steps which it is reasonable for the school to take include steps for ensuring that in the circumstances concerned the information is provided in an accessible format.
- e) Where the school is subject to a duty to make reasonable adjustments the school is not (subject to express provision to the contrary) entitled to require a disabled person, in relation to whom the school is required to comply with the duty, pay to any extent the school's costs of complying with the duty.

Scope of the Policy/Plan

8. This policy covers three main strands:

a) Improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which pupils with disabilities are able to take advantage of education and associated services - this covers:

- Aids to improve the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education. The physical environment includes things such as steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces and paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting ventilation, lifts, floor coverings, signs and furniture. Aids to physical access include ramps, handrails, lifts, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, adjustable lighting, blinds, induction loops and way-finding systems.
- Physical aids to access education also cover things such as IT equipment, enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept key boards, switches, specialist desks and chairs and portable aids for children with motor coordination and poor hand/eye skills, such as extra robust scientific glassware and specialist pens and pencils.
- The provision of a special piece of equipment or extra assistance will be made through the Special Education Needs (SEN) framework (i.e through statutory assessment) and to a lesser extent through the planning duty which applies to all schools.
- The distinction between auxiliary aids and services provided through the SEN route and those provided under the planning duty is that the SEN duties relate to the individual, whereas the planning duty relates to the provision of aids or services in terms of the population (and future population) of the school. For example a pupil with visual impairment might have low vision aids provided through the statement of SEN but the school might as a general measure provide blinds and adjustable lighting through the planning duty.

- With regard to expensive items of specialist equipment which a school could not reasonably be expected to provide from its own resources, a submission to the LA would be necessary to provide appropriate funding.

b) Increase the extent to which pupils with disabilities can access and participate in the school's curriculum - this strand of the planning duty will help to improve access to a full, broad and balanced curriculum. It covers a range of elements including ensuring that teaching and learning is accessible through school and classroom organisation and support, especially of staff, timetabling, curriculum options and staff information and training

The school will be expected to plan to improve progressively access to the curriculum for all disabled pupils although many adjustments to access will be dependent on individual needs and may be provided through the SEN framework. The accessibility strategies and plans will help to ensure that the school is planning and preparing to respond to the particular needs of individual pupils.

The definition of disability can include a wide range of SEN impairments, including hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These may amount to a disability if the condition is long-term (i.e. the condition is expected to persist for 12 months or more), and have a substantial detrimental effect on a child's ability to learn or participate in activities led or provided by the school (and/or its partners/agents etc on its behalf).

c) Improving the delivery of information to pupils with disabilities - this part of the duty covers planning to make information normally provided by the school in writing to its pupils, such as newsletters, timetables, information about school events, available to disabled pupils. This will include alternative formats such as Braille, audio-tape and large print and also the provision of information orally, through lip speaking or sign language, or through a recognised symbol or IT. This information should also be made available within a reasonable time frame and take account of the pupils' disabilities and pupil's and parents' preferred formats.

The school may wish to look at the needs of parents who may themselves have a physical, sensory or learning disability to determine how they can be supported in accessing essential information about the school.

Strategies for implementing the Accessibility Policy/Plan

9. The following strategies have been and continue to be adopted by the school to ensure compliance with the requirements of the EA2010 and in implementing the school's Accessibility Policy and Plan:
 - a) Having and maintaining high expectations of all of our pupils
 - b) Finding ways in which all pupils can take part in the full curriculum including sport, music and drama
 - c) Planning school activities, including all school trips and excursions, so that pupils with disabilities are able to participate fully

- d) Establishing and maintaining an admissions policy and criteria which does not discriminate against pupils with disabilities or treat them unfairly
- e) Devising teaching strategies which will remove barriers to learning and participation for pupils with disabilities
- f) Planning and (wherever possible/feasible) redesigning the physical environment of the school to cater for the needs of pupils with disabilities
- g) Raising awareness of disability amongst school staff through appropriate training and briefing
- h) Providing written information for pupils with disabilities in a form which is user friendly
- i) Ensuring that our reading books and other literature provide positive images of people with disabilities.

Action to implement this policy/plan

10. The following actions have been and continue to be taken by the school to ensure compliance with the requirements of the EA2010 and in implementing the school's Accessibility Policy and Plan:
- a) Undertaking an annual disability audit
 - b) Routinely reviewing and where necessary updating the action plan to include, short, medium and long term targets
 - c) Making sure that the school's the action plan is known to all teaching, support and ancillary staff, pupils and parents, with the plan forming part of the induction for all new staff and volunteers, also governors
 - d) Monitoring the deliver and accessing the impact/success of the plan

Prepared by Elaine Lacey 2015

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