ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

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Version	Date	Updated By
1.1	April 2018	P Platt
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1.5	September 2021	G Mann
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Rationale

This policy supports the school vision of a community where education is highly valued, diversity is embraced and everyone is encouraged to take control of their learning, embrace challenge and to develop into responsible young citizens. As such, the school seeks to:

- respond positively to the guidance in the DfES document 'Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils' and,
- adhere to current legislation.

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since then, the DDA has been revised, repealed and replaced by the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor has had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

- 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 at a substantial disadvantage;

- To plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

For the purposes of this policy the broad definition of 'disability' is taken from the DDA Act 1995 as follows - a person should be deemed disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These impairments include sensory impairments and learning difficulties and include certain medical conditions which may have a long-term and substantial effect on pupils' lives.

Pupils at The Wenlock School all have an Education, Health and Care Plan which recognises their complex needs which include but are not limited to a diagnosis of Autism and / or social, emotional and mental health needs. They may also have associated learning difficulties of one type or another. Whilst these difficulties may not wholly represent those presented above in the definition of disability, we believe that our pupils access needs should be considered with the same level of seriousness. In addition, visitors to the school may have such difficulties and we would wish them to feel welcome to our school and to be able to access as much of it as possible.

Aims of the policy

To meet our responsibilities under the DDA the school will prepare and maintain an accessibility plan for increasing, over time, the accessibility of the school for disabled pupils and others. The plan will seek to:

- Increase and ensure the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;

- Improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services;

- Improve the delivery to disabled pupils of written information which is provided to pupils who are not disabled.

The school's accessibility plan will be available to interested parties on request at reasonable times.

Implementation

Element 1: Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum

The school recognises that the curriculum covers not only teaching and learning but the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in leisure, sporting and cultural activities and school visits. Therefore, curriculum access will be considered at a whole school level as barriers to access of the curriculum can affect many different groups of pupils.

What follows are just some of the ways in which action can, and will, be taken:

- Teachers will plan their delivery of lessons in such a way as to ensure that they draw on the different strengths and aptitudes of pupils.
- The use of a buddy system to help new pupils integrate into the life of the school.
- Encouraging peer support in basic skills sessions.
- Peer mentoring opportunities to further develop self confidence and the re integration into lessons.
- Developing opportunities for 'circle time' and peer counselling where issues that may be affecting pupils can be discussed.

Element 2: Improving the physical environment of the school

Previously, the school was a campus for Dudley College before the conversion to a special needs school for young people with complex needs in 2018. As such, it meets the requirements of the Building Regulations and The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (2012). Furthermore, where new furniture and equipment is being purchased for school, such needs will be taken into consideration. For example, when purchasing carpets these will, as far as possible, be low pile, high density to facilitate the ease with which a wheelchair user could move within the buildings.

Element 3: Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils

The school will continually review practice to ensure that information presented to pupils is done so in such a way as to ensure full understanding. This may involve publishing documents, such as the pupil handbook in different forms e.g. wholly written; re-written using language at different levels of readability; providing some information in pictorial form; offering pupils the opportunity to discuss the information on offer thus using an oral rather than written approach.

Element 4: The accessibility plan

The school will develop and maintain an accessibility plan. The responsibility for the plan will rest with the senior management team. The general arrangement of the school has been implemented to be compliant with part M of the Building Regulations. The ground floor of the school is fully accessible. There is no lift in the building which could restrict the use of the mezzanine floor, the Cooking room and the Science lab to those with physical disabilities. A full access audit of the school will be undertaken on occupation, where practicable recommendations will be implemented. All future site work will conform to DDA requirements. In this way the school will develop a continuous process of improvement in access.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the plan will be the responsibility of the senior management team. They will report on progress to Acorn Education and Care at regular intervals. They may use several indicators to measure the success of the plan including such things as:

- Greater satisfaction being expressed by both pupils and their parents/carers.
- Evidence of the greater involvement of groups of pupils in the full life of the school.
- Improvements in staff confidence in teaching and supporting pupils.
- Improvements to the physical environment of the school.
- Information for pupils in a range of formats.