



ST. MARY'S
ACADEMY TRUST

St Mary's Academy Trust

Academies Accessibility Strategy

Date agreed by Board.....5th September 2016.....

Date to be reviewed.....September 2017.....

ACADEMIES' ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY - SEPTEMBER 2016-2019

Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 and related Equality Duty 2011 reiterate the duty upon schools/Academies as laid out in the previous Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The accompanying guidance for St Mary's Academy Trust schools makes it clear that schools continue to have a duty to produce an accessibility plan.

Schools must implement accessibility plans, which are aimed at:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

Schools will need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them.

St Mary's Academy Trust must, for the schools for which it is responsible, prepare an accessibility strategy based on the same principle as the accessibility plans for schools.

This accessibility strategy therefore applies to St Mary's Academy Trust schools.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

St Mary's Academy Trust will seek to ensure that schools within its jurisdiction do not disadvantage or discriminate against a disabled pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability.

Disability: The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as "when a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". This broad description covers physical disabilities, sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, and learning disabilities and also some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect.

The Act sets out details of matters that may be relevant when determining whether a person meets the definition of disability. **Long term** is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.

Schools: all Academies for which St Mary's Academy Trust is responsible.

Discrimination: A public body (in this case, a school) must not disadvantage a disabled pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability. The interpretation of "discrimination" with in relation to disability in this accessibility strategy reflects changes specified in the Equality Act 2010.

There can no longer be justification for direct discrimination in any circumstances (under the previous Disability Discrimination Act, schools could justify some direct discrimination – if it was a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim).

This accessibility strategy also seeks to protect pupils against indirect discrimination – a school must not do something which applies to all pupils but which is more likely to have an adverse effect on disabled pupils only.

The Trust will work closely with schools and school governors to agree reasonable adjustments, which will allow disabled pupils full access to school facilities and activities

Reasonable adjustments: In the Equality Duty 2011, the duty to make reasonable adjustments applies only to disabled people. For schools, this duty is summarised as follows and this accessibility strategy recognises and promotes these principles:

Where something a school does places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils, then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

Schools are not subject to the other reasonable adjustment duty to make alterations to physical features because this is already considered as part of their planning duties.

In addition to having a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for particular individual disabled pupils, schools will also have to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally as it is likely that any school will have a disabled pupil at some point. It is important to note that the duty on schools to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory. Schools should not wait until a disabled pupil arrives before making or planning to make adjustments. This may be too late and could lead to a pupil being substantially disadvantaged, it is important therefore for schools to plan a broad range of accessibility improvements over time.

However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments - e.g. being prepared to produce large font papers for pupils with a visual impairment even though there are no such pupils currently admitted to the school. Such a strategic and wider view of the school's approach to planning for disabled pupils will also link closely with its planning duties.

It will be for schools to consider the reasonableness of adjustments based on the circumstances of each case. (The Equality Act does not set out what would be a reasonable adjustment or a list of factors to consider in determining what is reasonable). However, factors a school may consider when assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment may include the financial or other resources required for the adjustment, its effectiveness, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements and whether aids should be made available from other agencies through the current statementing process under the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001. (The reasonable adjustments duties on schools are intended to complement the existing special educational needs (SEN) statement provisions).

Cost can play a major part in determining what is reasonable and it is more likely to be reasonable for a school with substantial financial resources to have to make an adjustment with a significant cost, than for a school with fewer resources.

What would be a reasonable “adjustment” is often a matter of judgement and, wherever possible, should be decided by agreement between the Trust, local authority, the school and parents/carers e.g. the right of a pupil to attend a school of their choice (within the context of

BMBC's admissions procedures) should be balanced with the responsibility of the Trust to make the most efficient use of its resources.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KEY PRINCIPLES

All Trust schools will be required to have an accessibility plan which is regularly reviewed (see example Annex A). This is the responsibility of the governing body. As part of this regular review, schools will also need to have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them.

An accessibility plan may be a freestanding document but may also be published as part of another document such as the school strategic and operational plans. It must be freely available to parents/carers.

Publishing, in the context of the Equality Duty, can be interpreted as making the school's accessibility plan widely and easily available, perhaps on the school's website. Hard copies should be available on request and, also on request; the school should be prepared to make available versions of the plan which would be accessible to parents with different communication needs (including English as a Foreign Language). Written information for disabled pupils needs to be given in formats that take account of their specific disabilities and the views expressed by the pupils and their parents about their preferred means of communication.

Trust schools have, as a minimum:

- Physical access to all areas of curriculum (this may not be 100% of the school building).
- Suitable parking and entrance to the school.
- A changing facility for pupils.

The Trust recognises that there is a likelihood of a continuing need for minor adaptations in schools to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Monitoring

Trust monitoring visits will include a question regarding the schools accessibility policy and their implementation of the Equality Duty 2011.

Publicising this Accessibility Strategy

This Accessibility Strategy will be publicly available on the St Mary's Academy Trust website.

Please note : The Trust acknowledges that it is the intention in the Equality Act 2010 that Schools will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils. Schools will (when provisions are implemented) be under a duty to supply auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments where these are not being supplied through Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements. The accompanying duty will not be introduced until a later date to allow time for planning and informed implementation). Annual review of this accessibility strategy will make the necessary adjustments when this duty is introduced.

MODEL ACCESSIBILITY PLAN (Current date to 3 years hence)

XXXXXX School

Introduction/Context

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous discrimination law and provides a single piece of legislation covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful.

This plan seeks to address the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to further the aims of our Vision Statement by:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum

Note: This covers teaching & learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits. It also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum.

- Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided, and

Note: This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education e.g. enhanced fire alarm systems for pupils with sensory impairment, disabled or allocated parking spaces etc.

- Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils, staff, parents and visitors

Note: This could include: handouts, timetables, textbooks, information about the school and school events. The information should be available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.

We recognise the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and will review annually in respect of progress and outcomes.

Our school's previous access plans were incorporated into a Disability Equality Scheme/Single Equality Scheme (dates). This access plan includes data and consultation from those schemes where they continue to be relevant.

Definition of disability

The definition of disability under the law is a wide one. A disabled person is someone who has a

Physical or mental impairment that has an adverse, substantial and long term effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

The definition includes people with a Hearing or Visual Impairment, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, mental health issues and incontinence. People with ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Downs Syndrome and Hydrocephalus are included. Medical conditions such as Cystic Fibrosis, severe Asthma, Diabetes, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Sickle Cell Anaemia and HIV are deemed disabilities. Facial disfigurement, severe Dyslexia, gross obesity and diagnosed eating disorders are all included.

If a person has been disabled in the past (for example, cancer recoverers and people with a history of mental illness) they are still covered by the legislation for the rest of their life.

Note: It is likely that Trust schools will at some point have disabled pupils, staff members and service users.

Associated policies and plans

This plan should be read in conjunction with the following school policies, strategies and documents:

Note: List here the relevant school documents, this could include:

- School vision statement
- Equality Duty evidence including Equality Objectives
- Special educational needs policy
- Curriculum policy
- School monitoring and evaluation strategy
- Behaviour Management policy
- Health & Safety policy

Development and Publication

The plan has been drawn up in conjunction with pupils, parents, staff and governors of the school and, where possible, the wider community. The plan will be available on the school website and in hardcopy on request.

Access plans should be easily available to interested parties. Many schools publish plans on their school website but it is good practice to offer different methods of publication to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Monitoring & Review

The plan will be monitored through the (insert school governing body committee responsible) and may be monitored by Ofsted during inspection processes. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as and when school policies are reviewed. The terms of reference for all governors' committees will include the need to consider Equality & Diversity issues as required by the Equality Act 2010.

The Accessibility Plan will be reported on annually in respect of progress and outcomes and provide a projected plan for the three year period ahead of the next review date.

**XXXXXX School Accessibility Plan - 2016 to 2019:
Improving the Curriculum Access, Physical Access or Delivery**

Example Curriculum Access Target

TARGET	STRATEGY	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME/RESPONSIBILITY
Training for staff in the identification of and teaching children with ASD and other specific learning difficulties.	All staff attend appropriate training. Outreach provision from external agencies.	All staff are familiar with the criteria for identifying specific needs and how best to support these children in the classroom.	Spring term 2017 SENCo/SEN Governor/all teaching and all teaching staff
Review TA deployment	In review meetings with TAs establish when they are available to support children each day that may be different to current working hours	Adult support is available during key times that individual children may need support e.g. lunchtimes, PE lessons, extra curricular activities	Reviewed annually Deputy Head/SENCo/TAs
Review TA deployment	In review meetings with TA's establish when they are available to support children each day that may be different to current working hours.	Adult support is available during key times that individual children may need support e.g. lunchtimes, PE lessons, extra-curricular activities	Reviewed annually. Deputy Head/SENCO/TAs
Review training for administering medicines/managing medical conditions	Review register of children with medical needs. Outreach provision and training from external agencies.	Staff are trained to manage diabetes/epilepsy and allergy reactions in school	Reviewed annually

TARGET	STRATEGY		TIMEFRAME/RESPONSIBILITY
Availability of written materials in alternative formats	The school will make itself aware of services available for converting written formats	The school will be able to provide written information in different formats when required for individual purposes	Spring term 2017 Literacy lead/SENCo/Business manager

