

## ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

(Accessibility for Disabled Pupils)

2016 to 2019

### INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to 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 elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies 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.

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—*

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums;*
- 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;*
- 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:

- within a reasonable time;*
- in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.*

## **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 and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010).

## **VISION**

Wigan's vision for its residents is for protecting vulnerable groups and enhancing self reliance, improving life opportunities and independence for everyone to start well, live well and age well; particularly for those most dependent on public services.

For our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) we want them to access to all the education, employment, training and social opportunities that they need to enhance their life chances, prepare them for adulthood and enable them to contribute to their community.

## **LOCAL CONTEXT**

Wigan has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The Council's partnership with schools is well-established and long-term with specialist teams providing advice and support at whole-school, group and individual levels. In addition to our special schools' provision a number of schools have resourced facilities. An outreach service from special schools provides an additional facet of support to mainstream colleagues.

The Local Authority (LA) SENCo Network provides an on-going training and development partnership enhancing provision and support for SEND pupils.

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM**

The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 should lead to the development of more integrated packages of support which will support children and young people with disabilities in accessing the curriculum.

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils and in particular for disabled pupils. Parents and carers are key partners in developing support for children and young people with disabilities. Schools must work with both parents/carers and children/young people to develop appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.

The Local Authority has an on-going training and development programme to embed the principles of personalisation and person-centred planning into all providers' work with children and young people with SEND. This, together with the graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25, should make the curriculum more accessible to all children and young people.

The local authority supports schools to respond to individual needs of pupils and training needs of staff with a range of specialist services, commissioned services and part traded services. The LA Local Offer provides information about the provision available to support access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The [High Expectations for All file](#), available in the Local Offer, provides information and advice about strategies and resources which can be used to maximise the presence, participation and achievement of all pupils, including those with disabilities in mainstream schools. [Guidance on supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#) is available in a separate document which can be found in the Local Offer.

The LA's SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) and the Wigan Parent Participation Development Group will work collaboratively in supporting the LA to engage with parents and carers of pupils with disabilities to inform and develop good practice within settings. The SEND Reforms Strategic Group, through their Monitoring and Evaluation Subgroup, will undertake analysis of outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Good practice will be shared through the SENCo Network and meetings with school leadership teams and governors.

## **IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to schools as well. All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to disabled pupils.

Much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings. Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools do need 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. Schools should ensure that in an emergency, there is provision to evacuate all building users, including disabled people, to a place of safety.

However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments. Wigan Council is committed to developing the range of provision available across the borough and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Schools may wish to consider an accessibility audit and may seek advice from the health and safety officer, school nurse, SEND Team or a building consultant e.g. NPS

## **IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a LA Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. The Wigan Local Offer is available at [www.wigan.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer) For those families who are not

able to access the internet access to the Local Offer is being made available through schools, libraries and local Life Centres.

The developing and widening use of ICT is significantly transforming the lives of everybody but especially those children and young people who are unable to communicate using traditional methods. We liaise with partners in schools and health professionals, e.g. Specialist SALT Service, to ensure there is a consistent and equitable method of securing expensive technological aids, such as Alternative and Augmentative Communication Aids.

In addition, the Council's Specialist Sensory Education Team and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service are able to make information available through alternative methods and formats.

The Wigan SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) offers impartial information, advice and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) encouraging and developing partnerships between children, young people, parents, schools, the council and other partners.

## **CONSULTATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

This strategy has been produced in association with parents and carers and in consultation with our schools and other partners. The Council will support schools in implementing the strategy which will be kept under regular review.

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