



Individual Executive Decision Notice

Report title	Draft School Accessibility Strategy	
Decision designation	GREEN	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Lynne Moran Education and Skills	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education	
Originating service	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	
Accountable employee	Adrian Leach	Head of SEND
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Report has been considered by	Education Directorate Leadership Team	23 April 2018
	Strategic Executive Board	8 May 2018
	Leaders Briefing	21 May 2018

Summary

To approve the draft School Accessibility Strategy and consultation action plan.

Recommendations for decision:

That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, in consultation with the Director of Education

1. Approve the Draft School Accessibility Strategy 2018-2020 contained in Appendix 1 to go forward for consultation.
2. Approve the associated consultation action plan contained in Appendix 2

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (the Council) is required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an accessibility strategy in which it promotes better access in school for pupils with disabilities.
- 1.2 The draft strategy contained in Appendix 1 should, once finalised and approved, be used by schools to inform their Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan. These plans should show how, over time, access to education for disabled pupils will be improved. Schools must publish their Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan with links to their Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information report that are available on the Local Offer.
- 1.3 The draft strategy requires consultation with key stakeholders, including schools, parents, children and young people and council services. Consultation will include representation from children and young people with physical disabilities. A timetable for consultation is included as Appendix 2.
- 1.4 Following approval of the draft Accessibility Strategy a process of consultation is planned during the summer term 2018 with the strategy finalised by September 2018.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 Approve the Draft Strategy for publication on the Wolverhampton SEND Local Offer, to comply with the SEND Code of Practice.
- 2.2 Approve consultation action plan outlined in Appendix 2.

3.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 3.1 As the City of Wolverhampton Council is legally obliged to produce a School Accessibility Strategy there are no alternative options.

4.0 Reasons for decision

- 4.1 To enable schools to further develop robust and effective Disability Equality Schemes and Accessibility Plans and ensure compliance with statutory regulations.

5.0 Financial implications

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.
[CS/12062018/O]

6.0 Legal implications

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by introducing new duties on local authorities (LA) and schools in relation to disabled pupils and prospective pupils. From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. The LA is required to have an accessibility strategy under the planning duty in the Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Section 88 (Schedule 10)
[RB/11062018/F]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Analysis will be carried out incorporating feedback received from the consultation.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications resulting from this report.

9.0 Human resources implications

- 9.1 There are no human resources implications resulting from this report.

10.0 Corporate Landlord implications

- 10.1 Corporate Landlord will support Education in ensuring pupils with disabilities are able to access school premises through the improvement of the physical environment.
- 10.2 Following consultation and publication of the Accessibility Strategy, Corporate Landlord will monitor, evaluate and review any physical adaptations included within the Accessibility Plan Action Plan.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>
- 11.2 SEN Code of Practice
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

12.0 Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1: Draft School Accessibility Strategy
- 12.2 Appendix 2: Draft School Accessibility Strategy Consultation Action Plan

Appendix 1

City of Wolverhampton Council

Schools Accessibility Strategy

1. Introduction

Educational performance is greatly improved in the City of Wolverhampton. We are incredibly proud of the achievements of the children and young people of our City. Effective education provision is viewed as a key factor in ensuring that Wolverhampton grows and thrives as a City at the heart of the West Midlands.

Improving access to education and educational achievement for pupils with disabilities is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, full participation in society, greater independence, access to employment opportunities and inclusion within mainstream education.

This accessibility strategy sets out the approach that the Council is taking to increase access to education for children and young people with disabilities, so that they can gain maximum benefit from their time in education. This strategy is also designed to support transitions across providers including in and out of Alternative Provision.

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 by introducing new duties on local authorities (LA) and schools in relation to disabled pupils and prospective pupils. From 1 October 2010, the Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. The LA is required to have an accessibility strategy under the planning duty in the Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Section 88 (Schedule 10): <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/10>.

The Equality Act states that Local Authorities in England and Wales must, in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body, prepare an accessibility strategy and further such strategies at such times as may be prescribed.

The Equality Act requires all providers including Schools, Further Education, Higher Education and Early Years settings to make reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantaging pupils with disabilities.

In addition to this, any setting constituted as a school have an additional duty to plan for better access for disabled pupils, as detailed below. The reasonable adjustments duty and a wider, more strategic planning approach for schools are intended to complement each other. This strategy therefore only applies only to maintained schools. The strategy is however not exclusive and welcomes alignment by partner academy schools based in the city.

2. The Requirements in Law

The General duty requires schools, when carrying out their functions, to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010;
- Eliminate harassment of pupils with disabilities that is related to their disability;
- Promote equality of opportunity between people with disabilities and other people;

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- Promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities;
- Encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life;
- Take steps to take account of individuals' disabilities even where that involves treating people more favourably than other people.

The General Duty applies across all schools, and applies to pupils, staff, parents/carers, and any other users of the school.

There is also a Specific Duty for schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the General Duty. The main requirement is for schools to prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, involving people with disabilities in its development, and to implement the scheme and report on it as required.

The Equality Act requires schools and LAs to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not at a substantial disadvantage and to enable pupils to participate in education and associated services.

When deciding whether a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools need to consider any potential impacts on pupils with disabilities in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress.

3. Duties on schools

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will improve the access to education for disabled pupils over time. The school's Accessibility Plan should be published on the school website, and hard copies provided upon request. There should be a link between the school's SEN information and the Accessibility Plan. Wolverhampton's Local Offer website contains links to all school websites and SEN information and this should include their Accessibility plans moving forward.

Key Data

- There are 7,502 pupils resident in the City who receive additional and specialist support
- There are 821 pupils on role in the 8 Special Schools.
- 6,600 pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are supported in mainstream settings

*source: School Census Spring 2018

Every local area is required to have Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). Further information on the City's demographics can be found here: <http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/jsna>

4. Scope and key aims of The City of Wolverhampton Accessibility Strategy

Ensuring that pupils with disabilities gain maximum benefit from their time in education is a priority for the Council. This can only be achieved through effective partnerships between all agencies that engage with the City's children and young people and their families.

As outlined in the SEND Code of Practice 2015:

...[T]he UK Government is committed to inclusive education of disabled children and young people and the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. The Children and Families Act 2014 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.

This strategy forms part of a range of strategies and plans being delivered by the City of Wolverhampton Council designed to improve access to mainstream education for children and young people with both visible and invisible disabilities and special educational needs.

Underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014, this strategy outlines the approach that the council will take when identifying and remediating any issues related to accessibility and participation.

Three key aims have been identified which are intended to maximise the benefits to children and young people with disabilities.

1. Increasing the extent to which pupils with disabilities can participate in the school curriculum;
2. Ensuring that pupils with disabilities are able to gain maximum benefit from their time in education through improving facilities and services provided or offered by schools.
3. Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils.

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

This will be achieved by:

- Providing on-going guidance and training to schools to support them in the effective implementation of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014
- Collecting and disseminating examples of good practice across the City and the wider educational community
- Providing information to encourage continued professional development in the area of special educational need, disability and inclusion.
- Ensuring continued access to advice and support through centrally maintained specialist services and partner organisations
- Further developing setting, schools and other education providers, as centres of excellence
- Working with schools to ensure that relevant information is readily available to support access on entry to/transfer between schools, and transition in and out of Alternative Provision.
- Ensuring that “inclusivity” is always a main priority whenever any change to curriculum and other policies are proposed.
- Ensuring schools regularly review their accessibility plans
- Ensure that support is available for schools for pupils with SEND who have English as an additional language through specialist CWC services.
- Provide support to pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs through specialist CWC services.

AIM 2: Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting schools in reviewing the physical access audit of their premises and ensuring they understand their responsibilities
- Ensuring that the Planning Authority monitors all building projects carried out centrally or by schools to address accessibility issues
- Providing schools with advice on disability and accessibility issues
- Creating a climate in which schools always identify “inclusivity” as a main priority whenever any change to the physical environment is proposed.
- External Resources Available to Schools
 - Through various specialist teams and services, the LA provides advice to schools about, for example, improving the acoustic environment for pupils with hearing impairment, the reduction of glare and the improvement of signage for pupils with visual impairment, and reasonable adjustments to the physical environment for pupils with mobility difficulties.
 - Physiotherapists can advise a school about an individual pupil’s mobility and physical development. This might include things like co-ordination and ability to sit, stand and walk. They can advise the school on how best to help the child develop physically, to keep the child as mobile as possible and on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the environment.
 - Occupational Therapists can advise a school about using activity-based therapies to help raise an individual pupil’s self-esteem and to encourage them to be as independent as possible. They will also advise on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the school environment if required.

AIM 3: Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils

This will be achieved by:

- Creating a culture of Inclusivity, a climate in which schools always identify “inclusivity” as a main priority whenever provision of information is planned. Our vision is also that all children including disabled children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities should be recognised as fully integrated citizens with the ability to contribute to their local community, and that when they need support to do this that the right support is available.
- Continuing to maintain specialist support services. We believe that every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities from Wolverhampton should expect to receive high quality provision which promotes good health, care and educational progress and achievement. This includes access to universal services as well as specialist support where required.
- Through the [Local Offer](#) which provides information in a single place for children and young people with special educational needs (SEND) and their parents or carers. Provision is available, within Wolverhampton Libraries & Community Hubs as well as City of Wolverhampton Council Civic Centre, to support access to the Local Offer.

- Though the Wolverhampton Information Advice and Support Service (WIASS) which is the impartial and confidential information, advice and support on matters relating to a child or young person's special educational needs or disability from birth to 25 years within Wolverhampton.

5. Governance

This strategy will be led by the Director of Education through a strategic group which will include members from:

- The SEND Service
- The Corporate Landlord Service
- The Health Service
- Parents/carers
- Children and young people

The Accessibility strategy and governance will be aligned to the SEND Partnership and sit within the overall governance structure for delivery of the SEND strategy and align to its priority areas of developing high quality accessible pathways for children and young people with SEND. The SEND Partnership will be responsible for ensuring that the Accessibility Strategy is aligned with and/or inform the following:

- Wolverhampton's Joint Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) 2015 - 2020
- Asset Management Plans
- Schools' Accessibility Plans
- The Early Years Plan
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- The Council's Vision for Education
- The Council's Strategic Plans

To support schools across the city and ensure that there is a clear and accessible pathway the Council will provide Wolverhampton Schools with an Accessibility Template. The template will assist school's when creating their own Accessibility Strategies so that mirror the overarching strategy of the Council.

Strategy Review

This strategy will be reviewed and revised as necessary in line with the overall review of SEND priorities and delivery.

Evaluation and Monitoring

The Council recognises the need to monitor, evaluate and review the processes within the Local Authority and schools to ensure that accessibility is increased and the best use is made of all of the resources.

The Corporate Landlord Service, drawing on information provided by schools, Academies, settings, support organisations and health colleagues will carry out implementation, review and evaluation of the strategy.

Continuing to maintain specialist support services

We believe that every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities from Wolverhampton should expect to receive high quality provision which promotes good health, care and educational progress and achievement. This includes access to universal services as well as specialist support where required.

Background Documents

The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):

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SEN Code of Practice:

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Appendix 2: Draft School Accessibility Strategy Action Plan

Name of Consultation	City of Wolverhampton Council: Schools Accessibility Strategy	Key Dates / Activity
Reason for consultation	To gain the views of schools, parents, children and young people and council services on the Draft Schools Accessibility Strategy.	
Main aims and objectives	Ensure that the Strategy is co-produced to meet the needs of children and young people across Wolverhampton. Gain the information required to be able to formulate an action plan to finalise the Strategy.	
Agree Consultation format	Co-produce consultation methodology and questions with strategic partners	June 2018
When will the consultation take place?	Dissemination of draft strategy to consultees including publication online.	18 June 2018
	Receive consultation responses.	June/July 2018
	Consultation ends	23 July 2018
	Co-produce consultation response and agree final Strategy for approval	September 2018
Who will we consult?	Stakeholder Group, Headteachers, SENCOs, School Chair of Governors, Parents/Carers, Voice4Parents, Children & Young People, Changing our Lives, Relevant CWC Teams, Ward Members, Trade Unions, Diocese	

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How will we distribute the consultation material?	Publication on Local Offer website, dissemination through Headteacher's bulletin, Real Talk CYP event, Modern.Gov, Governor Newsletter.	June 2018
Who will monitor responses and provide updates on results?	Send Support Officer / Graduate Management Trainee.	June/July 2018
Who will analyse the results from the consultation?	Head of SEND.	July 2018
Who will formulate action plan based on results of consultation?	Head of SEND.	August 2018
Who will review/approve final Strategy following consultation.	Education Leadership Team, Strategic Executive Board, Scrutiny, Cabinet.	Autumn Term 2018