

Report title	School Accessibility Strategy	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Lynne Moran Education and Skills	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education	
Originating service	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	
Accountable employee	Adrian Leach	Head of SEND
	Tel	01902 553927
	Email	Adrian.leach@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board	2 October 2018
	Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel	5 September 2018

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the School Accessibility Strategy.

Recommendation for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to:

1. Note the summary of consultation responses listed as Appendix 3 to this report.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for City of Wolverhampton Council's proposed School Accessibility Strategy.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 This item was considered as pre-decision scrutiny on 5 September 2018 by Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel and will therefore not be available to call in once a decision is made by Cabinet.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The Strategy, attached at Appendix 1 to this report 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 pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 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.
- 2.4 This strategy will be led by the Director of Education through a School Accessibility Strategic Group which will include members from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service, Corporate Landlord service, health professionals, parents/carers, Children & Young People service, Headteachers and special educational needs co-ordinators.
- 2.5 During the consultation period, which ran from 18 June 2018 to 20 July 2018, more than 600 letters and consultation documents were distributed to stakeholders and consultation was advertised through various social media channels e.g. Wolverhampton Today, WIASS twitter feed and Voice 4 Parents Facebook page and newsletters. Stakeholders included the Governing Boards of Wolverhampton schools, members of staff at Wolverhampton Schools and parents/carers of pupils attending Wolverhampton Schools. A complete list of stakeholders who were consulted can be found at Appendix 2 to this report.
- 2.6 During the Consultation period, 23 written responses were received by the Council as summarised in Appendix 3 to this report, a full copy of consultation responses is available on request. These were completed by a range of stakeholders including members of School staff (five responses), parents/carers (13 responses), members of Wolverhampton Schools' Governing Boards (one response), Educational Professionals (three responses) and a sixth form pupil (one response)

Please note that some respondents fulfil more than one role.

2.7 A copy of the consultation form disseminated can be found as Appendix 4 to this report.

3.0 Progress following public consultation

3.1 Respondents felt that the proposed School Accessibility Strategic Group membership should include school-based Education professionals. As a result of this the membership of the Group has been widened to include Headteachers and SENCOs.

3.2 Respondents felt that the Strategy should also focus on improving access into provision within the City, in order to decrease the number of children and young people who are required to attend specialist settings outside of Wolverhampton. As a result of this, aim 2.1 of the Strategy was amended to ensure schools are supported when reviewing their premises physical access audit, in order to increase availability of provision in Wolverhampton.

3.3 One main concern among parents and carers was that information often disseminated to parents, carers and young people is done in an inaccessible or unsuitable format. Following this aim 3.5 of the Strategy has been added, which will provide guidance to schools on the delivery of accessible information.

4.0 Progress Following Pre-Decision Scrutiny

4.1 The Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel agreed with consultation respondents that continued professional development (CPD) of school staff should be highlighted as a priority area. As a result of this aim 1.3 has been extended to ensure CPD is a priority supported through the Strategy.

4.2 The Panel also echoed the views of some consultation respondents, that the Strategy should provide guidance on how the review and development of the physical environment of schools should support the needs of Children and Young People with non-physical disabilities, such as SEMH and Autism. In response to this, aim 2.2 of the Strategy was added to "Provide guidance and disseminate good practice on how a School's physical environment should be adapted to support the needs of Children and Young People with non-physical disabilities, as well as those with physical disabilities".

5.0 Evaluation of alternative options

5.1 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.

6.0 Reasons for decision

6.1 The objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Increase the extent to which pupils with special educational needs and/or disability can participate in the school curriculum;
2. Ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disability are able to gain maximum benefit from their time in education through improving facilities and services provided or offered by schools.

3. Improve the delivery of information to pupils with special educational needs and/or disability.

6.2 To support schools to further develop robust and effective Disability Equality Schemes and Accessibility Plans.

6.3 To ensure compliance with statutory regulations.

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.
[DB/24082018/G]

8.0 Legal implications

8.1 The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) 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 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/29082018/K]

9.0 Equalities implications

9.1 Following consultation an Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out, which concluded that the Accessibility Strategy would have a positive impact on children and young people with disabilities and a neutral impact in relation to other areas covered by the Equalities Act.

10.0 Environmental implications

10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

11.0 Human resources implications

11.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

12.0 Corporate landlord implications

12.1 Corporate Landlord will support Education in ensuring pupils with disabilities are able to access school premises through the improvement of the physical environment.

12.2 Corporate Landlord will monitor, evaluate and review any physical adaptations included within the Accessibility Strategy Action Plan.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

13.1 The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

13.2 SEN Code of Practice

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

13.3 Draft School Accessibility Strategy Individual Executive Decision Notice

14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: School Accessibility Strategy

Appendix 2: List of Consultees

Appendix 3: Consultation Summary

Appendix 4: Blank Consultation Form