Cambridgeshire Accessibility Strategy 2003
Additional notes 2015

Introduction

The Accessibility Strategy 2003 sets out how the Council will discharge its statutory duty to increase, progressively, the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils. In repealing the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by SENDA 2001, the requirement for a local authority to provide an Accessibility Strategy continued, unchanged, with the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 (the Act).

Schedule 10 of the Act requires a local authority to produce a time-limited strategy for:

a) Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools’ curricula.

b) Improving the physical environment of schools for the purposes of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by schools.

c) Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The Act requires each school to produce an Access Plan showing how it will implement the three requirements; this clearly indicates a partnership necessitating local authorities and schools to be aware of their respective roles.

Disability arises when the needs of pupils arising from substantial and enduring impairment: - (i) physical; (ii) sensory; (iii) cognitive; or, (iv) emotional are not met and if the outcome is substantial detriment it is likely to be unlawful discrimination. Whilst the requirement of the Act is to prescribe not less favourable treatment for people qualifying under the nine protected characteristics, disability is unique in the Act as there is the additional requirement to take positive action for mitigating any adverse impact impairment might have on education, employment and use of services – from either public or private providers.
In May 2014, the Department for Education published, *The Equality Act 2010 and Schools: Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities*. That guidance document is recommended and it will not be duplicated in this strategy. However, an accessibility strategy or plan does not exist in isolation and must be considered as part of the overall arrangements for the inclusion of all for educational and associated services and to meet access needs arising from substantial impairment.

**Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools’ curricula.**

To assist schools in meeting this requirement, Cambridgeshire County Council provides:-

- Training and awareness opportunities for teachers, governors and parents.
- Encouragement and support for sharing good practice.
- Information on, and access to, the support services which are available for teachers, governors and parents.
- Specialist help for increasing inclusion to the curriculum.
- Assessments of needs and recommendations for achieving an increasingly accessible curriculum for all, including pupils needing positive action in the form of reasonably adjusting existing policy, procedure, practice and provision after taking into account all the circumstances of the individual child or young person. This will include guidance on providing auxiliary aids and services to enable access to an increasingly inclusive curriculum.
- Assurance that statements of special educational needs and/or Education Health and Care Plans will be sufficiently extensive and appropriately financed.
- Robust admission policies, procedures and practices that include requirement to meet access requirements.
- Use of other organisations (e.g. Pinpoint an independent information, support and involvement network for parents; and Voiceability a support network for people who face disadvantage or discrimination) to gather views of families and students and delivering these messages to schools.
Improving the physical environment of schools for the purposes of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by schools.

When SENDA 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, school buildings were not covered by the Building Regulations Part M Access to Buildings and Their Facilities nor were any applications for alterations extensions or changing the use of any buildings. By 2006, Part M had been radically updated, applying to all building new, altered and extended and the design guidance therein was underpinned by BS 8300; although, not all of the BS 8300 recommendations had, or have, been incorporated. Whilst Part M is very useful, its specifications are primarily designed for the independent use of buildings by adults. In light of this, the Department for Education Building Bulletins provide additional guidance on many aspects of school design, Bulletin 102 Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs together with Part M should inform all educational construction projects. That is to say, meeting this requirement must be policy which is demonstrably and explicitly embedded in School Development Plans, at an early stage in the design process and will be checked as part of the Development and Building Control service.

However, this requirement is not confined to curricula, it includes ‘benefits, facilities and services provided by schools’ and, as well as students, includes school employees, parental visits and community use. Therefore, schools must have a clear idea of what is educational and what is not. A student is entitled to be able to access a suitable curriculum; in the case of non-educational school activities, their design and delivery should be inclusive or their non-accessibility must not lead to substantial detriment – which could be unlawful discrimination. The Act allows for the delivery of services by reasonable alternative means.

To meet this requirement, Cambridgeshire County Council will ensure that:

- All Educational Capital projects will continue to be informed by the principles of inclusive design.
Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Since the introduction of SENDA 2001, there has been a revolution in communication modes and in the format and distribution of information which has positively impacted on the scope for inclusive curriculum delivery. Educational I.T. will continue to extend the nature and scope of communication for teaching and provide encouragement for teaching and learning through the use of all five senses.

Further guidance on Access can be found on the Cambridgeshire Local Offer at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/localoffer) SEND Guidance 0-25 years

Next steps
In May 2014 the Department of Education published ‘[The Equality Act 2010 and Schools: Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities](http://www.gov.uk)’ This is non-statutory advice produced to help schools to understand how the Equality Act affects them and how to fulfil their duties under the Act. The Department of Education has said that it will review the ‘Equality Act 2010 and Schools’ before April 2016. We will be reviewing the Cambridgeshire Accessibility Strategy 2016-2017.