

# Accessible Schools: Summary Guidance

**Headteachers and  
Chairs of Governors**

**All schools in  
England**

Status: recommended

Date of Issue: 10 June 2002

Ref: DfES/0462/2002

## **Overview**

This document summarises the guidance provided in 'Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils' issued in July 2002. Copies of the full guidance are available free of charge from DfES Publications (Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Fax: 0845 60 333 60) and the DfES website [www.dfes.gov.uk/sen](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen).



## Introduction

1. Schools already provide for the additional needs of disabled pupils who have special educational needs (SEN). From September 2002, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) will outlaw discrimination by schools and LEAs against either current or prospective disabled pupils in their access to education. The new duties build on and complement best inclusive practice. One of the new duties is to plan to increase over time the accessibility of schools for disabled pupils.
2. The full guidance is designed to help schools and LEAs understand the new duty to plan and implement plans for improving the accessibility of schools for disabled pupils. It describes the processes that schools and LEAs should follow to produce effective strategies and plans. Schools that are already inclusive and are ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils should find these duties very manageable.
3. Although this is a new duty to plan, it does not require a separate planning process. Schools might dovetail their accessibility plans with other plans, for example the School Development Plan. In reporting to parents in their Annual Report, governors might include a new section on access planning within the SEN report.

## Statutory Responsibilities

4. The DDA, as amended by the SEN and Disability Act 2001, places a duty on all schools and LEAs to plan to increase over time the accessibility of schools for disabled pupils and to implement their plans. Schools are required to produce accessibility plans for their individual school and LEAs are under a duty to prepare accessibility strategies covering the maintained schools in their area. Accessibility plans and strategies must be in writing. The nature and content of plans will depend on the size of school and the resources available to the school. We would encourage LEAs and schools to share information on their plans so that LEA accessibility strategies and individual schools' accessibility plans inform each other.
5. The planning duty comes into force in September 2002. Schools and LEAs should have prepared and have in place, the first written plans and strategies by April 2003. The first plans and strategies will run for a period of 3 years from April 2003 to March 2006 though schools and LEAs can also plan for beyond March 2006 if they wish to do so. LEAs and schools are under a duty to implement, review and revise if necessary, their strategies and plans over this 3-year period.
6. Schools and LEAs are required to plan for:
  - **increasing access for disabled pupils to the school curriculum.** This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits.
  - **improving access to the physical environment of schools.** This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education.
  - **improving the delivery of written information to disabled pupils.** This will include planning to make written information that is normally provided by the school to its pupils available to disabled pupils. Examples might include handouts, timetables, textbooks and information about school events. The information should take account of pupils' disabilities and pupils' and parents' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame.



## **Definition of Disability**

7. A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

## **Publicising Plans and Strategies**

8. Schools and LEAs are required to make their plans publicly available as follows:
- maintained schools have a duty to publish information about their accessibility plans in their governors' annual report to parents;
  - non-maintained special schools are required to reproduce their accessibility plan in their annual prospectus;
  - independent schools have to make their accessibility plans available to interested parties on request at reasonable times; and
  - LEAs are required to make their strategies available for inspection to interested parties at reasonable times.

## **Monitoring and redress**

9. As part of their inspections, OFSTED will monitor LEAs' accessibility strategies and schools' accessibility plans.

10. The Secretary of State can intervene where an LEA or school is not complying with the planning duty and can direct an LEA or school to do so. LEAs and schools might find it helpful to extend their local complaint procedures to cover their accessibility strategies and plans.



## Identifying Barriers to Access: A Checklist.

This list should help you identify barriers to access that exist in schools. The list is not exhaustive. It is designed to encourage a flexible approach to the further questioning of the accessibility of your school.

### Section 1: How does your school deliver the curriculum?

Question	Yes	No
Do you ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary training to teach and support disabled pupils?		
Are your classrooms optimally organised for disabled pupils?		
Do lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve?		
Are lessons responsive to pupil diversity?		
Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class?		
Are all pupils encouraged to take part in music, drama and physical activities?		
Do staff recognise and allow for the mental effort expended by some disabled pupils, for example using lip reading?		
Do staff recognise and allow for the additional time required by some disabled pupils to use equipment in practical work?		
Do staff provide alternative ways of giving access to experience or understanding for disabled pupils who cannot engage in particular activities, for example some forms of exercise in physical education?		
Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for students with disabilities?		
Are school visits, including overseas visits, made accessible to all pupils irrespective of attainment or impairment?		
Are there high expectations of all pupils?		
Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?		



**Section 2:** Is your school designed to meet the needs of all pupils?

**Question**

**Yes No**

Does the size and layout of areas - including all academic, sporting, play, social facilities; classrooms, the assembly hall, canteen, library, gymnasium and outdoor sporting facilities, playgrounds and common rooms - allow access for all pupils?

Can pupils who use wheelchairs move around the school without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, toilet facilities and showers?

Are pathways of travel around the school site and parking arrangements safe, routes logical and well signed?

Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform ALL pupils, including pupils with SEN and disability; including alarms with both visual and auditory components?

Are non-visual guides used, to assist people to use buildings including lifts with tactile buttons?

Could any of the décor or signage be considered to be confusing or disorientating for disabled pupils with visual impairment, autism or epilepsy?

Are areas to which pupils should have access well lit?

Are steps made to reduce background noise for hearing impaired pupils such as considering a room's acoustics, noisy equipment?

Is furniture and equipment selected, adjusted and located appropriately?

**Section 3:** How does your school deliver materials in other formats?

**Question**

**Yes No**

Do you provide information in simple language, symbols, large print, on audiotape or in Braille for pupils and prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information?

Do you ensure that information is presented to groups in a way which is user friendly for people with disabilities e.g. by reading aloud overhead projections and describing diagrams?

Do you have the facilities such as ICT to produce written information in different formats?

Do you ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist people with disabilities?



## Creating an Access Plan

This is an example of a plan that a school might produce after reviewing existing plans (in particular refurbishments and arrangements and SEN policy), looking at options for improving accessibility within existing arrangements and an audit of the school site for accessibility. The school should monitor the implementation of the plan and keep under review the access needs of the school.

	<b>Targets</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Goals achieved</b>
<b>Short Term</b>	Availability of written material in alternative formats.	The school makes itself aware of the services available through its LEA for converting written information into alternative formats.	If needed the school can provide written information in alternative formats.	Term 3 2002/3	Delivery of information to disabled pupils improved.
<b>Medium Term</b>	Incorporation of appropriate colour schemes when refurbishing to benefit pupils with visual impairments and install window blinds.	Seek advice from LEA sensory support service on appropriate colour schemes and blinds.	Several classrooms are made more accessible to visually impaired children.	Term 1 2003/4	Physical accessibility of school increased.
	Training for teachers on differentiating the curriculum.	After an audit the school decides that some teachers would benefit from training on differentiating the curriculum.	Teachers are able to more fully meet the requirements of disabled children's needs with regards to accessing the curriculum.	Term 2 2003/4	Increase in access to the National Curriculum.
<b>Long Term</b>	School plans to improve access to designated areas over successive financial years. The school decides which of its entrances and exits have priority, and plans to fit ramps and handrails to all of these.	Planned use of minor capital delegated resources and discuss with the LEA using Schools Access Initiative funding.	Having secured capital resources from the LEA, over three-year period the school's entry areas and the science block will be fully accessible.	Term 3 2004/5	Physical accessibility of school increased.

© Crown copyright 2002

Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non commercial education or training purposes on the condition that the source is acknowledged.

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

