

The Heart of the Forest Community Special School
Accessibility plan
2016 -2019

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since 2002 the Governing Body has had three key duties towards pupils with a disability under part 4 of the DDA:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for reasons related to their disability.
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled people so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage.
- To plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

This plan seeks to address the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which replaces the DDA (1995)

For the purpose of this policy the term 'disability' has the same meaning as that given in the DDA, SENDA and the Equality Act 2010:

'A person suffers 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 daily activities.'

(www.Direct.gov.uk/Disability)

Pupils at the Heart of The Forest Community Special School are all likely to be deemed disabled under the definition.

Our vision statement is:

'This school strives towards recognition as a centre of excellence, enabling its pupils to benefit from a learning environment that is safe, relevant, inclusive, purposely creative and enjoyable.'

We ensure that all pupils are included in the full life of the school through the implementation of all our policies.

Staff and visitors can also expect to be treated with respect for their individual abilities and disabilities and to have reasonable adjustments made for their needs.

Local Authorities and school governors have the duty to publish Accessibility Strategies and Plans.

The policy covers the three main strands of the planning duty:

- To increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum.
- To improve the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services.
- To improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

It is a requirement that the school's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised annually. The main aims of our plan are incorporated within this policy with the detailed arrangements of the delivery of it incorporated within the School Improvement Plan.

1. Improving the physical environment

There is a duty to improve the physical environment in order to better meet the needs of disabled pupils and to provide physical aids to support access to education.

The Heart of the Forest Community Special School is a relatively new build (2010) and currently is designated for 100 pupils. It is possible to accommodate more pupils in agreement with the Local Authority. Staff or governors were involved at every stage of the design process for the original build to ensure that the needs of our pupils with learning, physical and sensory disabilities remained paramount and to ultimately provide an environment that is safe and secure in which all pupils can maximise their independence.

The governing body are committed to ensuring that all renovations funded centrally or through delegated budget take into account the needs of all our pupils.

The school has a range of specialist curriculum facilities designed to meet the needs of the pupils and all facilities are accessible to all pupils. The inclusion of a hydrotherapy pool required that the school raised additional funding to provide this invaluable resource.

A range of specialist equipment to support the needs of the pupils is routinely available. This includes hoists and other personal care equipment, touch screens, plasma screens, switches and supported seating. Other specialist equipment to support pupils with visual or hearing impairment is available through the advisory teaching services. The school works in partnership with the physiotherapist, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and school nurse to identify pupils' individual needs and to ensure that appropriate physical equipment is made available. Wheelchairs and specialist equipment for home are provided by the NHS, Social Services or LA.

Recent school developments arising from our previous Accessibility Plans include:

- The development of two new inclusive classrooms to respond to our increasing school population. These rooms have newly converted personal care rooms as an en-suite facility and have new hoists to ensure that the rooms are accessible to all.
- The upgrade of our hydrotherapy room to include a Jacuzzi facility.

- The building of a conservatory to provide a sensory environment for Key Stage 4 pupils with Sensory/challenging needs.
- The building of two outdoor play areas to include a zip-wire, a wheelchair accessible swing and play castle, a scramble net, slides and interactive panels.
- The purchase of additional soft play equipment including a safe trampoline for our Early Years pupils and our younger pupils with PMLD.
- The expansion of our outdoor play areas
- Improved access to the school via the main entrance by making the front doors accessible to people in wheelchairs.
- More sensory spaces within school in response to the changing needs of our school population.
- The purchase of 17 seater adapted minibus and an adapted car.
- The construction of an inclusive sports pavilion

Our Aims

- To develop an inclusive Market Garden Area and to improve access to gardening plots
- To upgrade our Sensory Room
- To improve play areas in the Primary Department
- To create additional changing areas in response to the needs of our PMLD pupils.
- To develop the area around the pavilion to improve access to a variety of sporting activities

2. Participation in the school curriculum

There is a duty to ensure that full access to a broad and balanced curriculum through teaching and learning strategies, school and classroom organisation, deployment and training and staff, timetabling and the selection of options.

At the Heart of The Forest Community Special School our broad and balanced, wide-ranging and relevant curriculum aims to meet the extensive needs and interests of all our learners. Our schemes of work are specially adapted and are reviewed and updated regularly to make sure that they remain relevant. We use specialist teaching and learning strategies such as structured teaching and PECS and we carefully integrate therapies into classroom practice. Teachers are skilled at ensuring that lessons are differentiated to the needs of the pupils and they assess learning to inform teaching as an ongoing process. We aim to ensure that the range of external accreditation opportunities at KS4 and 5 meet the needs of all pupils. Ongoing careful consideration of how we deploy staff ensures that individual needs are met. The school is committed to high quality professional development opportunities for all staff to ensure that we remain at the cutting edge of new developments in the field of Special Education. Class timetables are flexible to suit individual need and some pupils with high levels of disability may follow individually adapted timetables.

Recent school developments arising from our previous Accessibility Plan include:

A focus on the development of Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning strategies within the classroom has led to us achieving a good judgement in our recent OFSTED inspection. We have achieved our Achievement for All Quality Mark and our Quality Lead Status.

We have revised our curriculum at KS2, 3 and 4 to move to a thematic model of delivery. This gives greater scope for inclusive pedagogy to take place. We have adapted our curriculum to meet the demands of the new National Curriculum.

We have developed flexibility in placing pupils in KS1 so that they can remain in the Early Years Department if it is deemed that they would benefit from the Early Years Curriculum for an extended period.

We have focussed on the learning of our pupils with PMLD to ensure that they are fully included and are learning to their optimum. This remains a focus within our current plan. Continuing Professional Development of all staff remains a high priority and we believe that this is necessary to ensure maximum impact on pupil learning.

We have developed a comprehensive inclusive cycling project through the use of our Sports Premium funding and we now have a range of adapted bikes to accommodate all our pupils.

We are now offering this facility to other schools and community groups.

We trialled the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award for our Leavers in 2015-16.

Our Aims

- To continue to review the curriculum in light of government changes to ensure that all our pupils have full access.
- To develop an inclusive cycling club and embed cycling as a part of our PE curriculum
- To further develop the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- To embed Literacy and Numeracy qualifications at KS4 and KS5 and review the accreditation currently offered.
- To improve education outside the classroom for all pupils

3. Information to pupils with disabilities

There is a duty to provide information, normally provided by the school in writing to its pupils, to disabled pupils.

Communication is paramount within the learning environment of the school. The nature of our learners is as such that communication plays a vital role in their cognitive, social and emotional development. Our emphasis on communication has been the driving factor behind our involvement in the Gloucestershire Total Communication Project and the evolution of our Specialist Curriculum. Signs, symbols and objects of reference are used throughout the school to ensure that all pupils understand what is required of them and can understand the curriculum as it is presented. General notices and displays are presented using symbols.

The development of 'Pupil Voice' is high priority within our improvement planning and we have a Student Council whereby elected pupils represent the views of their designated class at regular School Council meetings. They also represent the school at the county Inclusive School Council Conference.

Recent school developments arising from our previous Accessibility Plan include:

Our development of an active School Council to represent the views of their fellow pupils and to have an active role in school improvement.

An active programme of Total Communication training for all interested parties to extend the Total Communication environment of the child and to ensure that we are all responsive communicators.

The development of our school website which includes the use of 'Point' - a device that will show the widget symbol of the word on the screen if you hover over it with the pointer.

The development of iPads as an aid to communication and as a learning tool and the introduction of eye gaze technology

Our Aims

- To standardise aspects of Total Communication throughout the school whilst ensuring that we are responsive to all pupils' individual communication needs
- To improve the website to incorporate more symbols, videos and photographs
- To improvement community engagement with Total Communication approaches to improve communication on educational visits in collaboration with the Speech and Language Therapist.
- To develop a protocol for the use of the eye gaze to ensure that it benefits specific pupils and gives them a voice.

Monitoring

The school recognises that monitoring is essential to ensure that no pupils are being disadvantaged. As part of the school improvement process information is collected and analysed in relation to admissions, attainment, attendance and exclusions. Monitoring arrangements will be detailed in the school improvement plan and will include regular Governor Involvement in those arrangements throughout the school year.

Review

The accessibility policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing body.

This policy is available in hard copy on request at the school office and it will be displayed on the school website. Parents and carers will be informed of the policy via the school newsletter.

Ratified on:

Chair of the Governing Body:

July 2016