

Children, Education & Families

Schools Accessibility Strategy Revised 2013



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Children, Education & Families**

SCHOOLS ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty build on previous legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act. Available guidance makes it clear that schools are still required to produce an accessibility plan. This strategy sets out how Oxfordshire County Council proposes to increase access to education for disabled pupils in the schools for which it is responsible, specifically to:

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

This strategy applies to:

- disabled pupils who are in schools now;
- disabled pupils who are in the school system but at an earlier key stage;
- disabled pupils who are not yet in the school system but about whom Oxfordshire County Council and other agencies may have information.

The strategy is for schools, governors, parents/carers, professionals and members of the local community. It should inform individual School Access Plans developed with children and young people with disabilities and implemented by each school.

This accessibility strategy applies to local authority maintained schools, nurseries, children's centres and early years settings. It does not apply to academies, PFI funded schools or private nursery providers on school sites. Owners/governing bodies of such provisions must produce their own accessibility strategy in accordance with the Equality Act.

2. Values

The Children, Education & Families directorate works to the County Council's [Equality Policy 2012 -2017](#) and this consistent approach in conjunction with this Accessibility Strategy will ensure that this is the best way forward for our disabled children and disabled young people in our schools and early years' settings.

Children and young people in Oxfordshire have told us what equality means for them:

- Being fair and having equal rights.
- Being able to be different but not being treated differently.
- Being different but not being picked on because of it.
- Being the same and being treated the same.

Children and young people in Oxfordshire have told us what diversity means for them:

- People being different.
- People being different and being proud to be different but not being picked on for it.
- What we thought it was that makes us, us.

3. Legislation

Local authorities and schools have had a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils since 2002. This was originally under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) and subsequently under the Equality Act 2010. There are three key duties:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favorably for a reason related to their disability.
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage.
- To publish and implement an accessibility strategy to increase access to school education for disabled pupils.

From September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for local authorities and schools included a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. Many of the reasonable adjustments that schools are already making for disabled pupils include the use of some auxiliary aids, such as coloured overlays for dyslexic pupils, pen grips, adapted PE equipment, adapted keyboards and computer software. Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and will often involve a change in practice rather than the provision of expensive pieces of equipment or additional staff.

The reasonable adjustments duty is triggered only where there is a need to avoid 'substantial disadvantage'. Substantial is defined as being anything more than minor or trivial. Whether or not a disabled pupil is at a substantial disadvantage or not will depend on the individual situation.

These duties apply to disabled pupils, as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

The Act says that a pupil has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. More guidance on the definition of disability is available from [EHRC - Human rights: practical guidance](#)

The definition can include a wide range of impairments, including hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or people diagnosed with cancer, HIV infection or multiple sclerosis. An impairment does not of itself mean that a pupil is disabled. It is the effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities that has to be considered.

The test of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activity is whether it affects one or more of the following:

- mobility;
- manual dexterity;
- physical co-ordination;
- continence;
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand;
- perception of risk of physical danger.

A child's ability to memorize, concentrate, learn, speak, move, make and maintain positive relationships, is central to their education. An impairment that has a long-term and substantial effect on a child's ability to do these things may amount to a disability.

Some disabled pupils also have special educational needs (SEN) and may be receiving support via school-based SEN provision or have a statement of SEN. Just because a disabled pupil has SEN or has a statement does not take away the duty to make reasonable adjustments for them. In practice, of course, many disabled pupils who also have a statement of SEN will receive all the support they need through the SEN framework and there will be nothing extra the school has to do. However, some disabled pupils will not have SEN, and some disabled pupils with SEN will still need reasonable adjustments to be made for them in addition to any support they receive through the SEN framework.

Other duties

Oxfordshire County Council has an [Equality Policy 2012 – 2017](#) which sets out how the Council is approaching its responsibilities for ensuring that all residents in Oxfordshire have fair access to services and equal life chances.

Since October 1999 it has been illegal for local authorities and governing bodies to discriminate against disabled people in the provision of non-educational services on school premises on the basis of their disability.

Health and Safety

The Equality Act 2010 does not override health and safety legislation. If making a particular adjustment would increase the risks to the health and safety of any person (including the disabled pupil in question) then this is a relevant factor in deciding whether it is reasonable to make that adjustment. However, as with the approach to any question of health and safety and risk assessment, schools are not required to eliminate all risk. Suitable and sufficient risk assessments should be used to help determine where risks are likely to arise and what action can be taken to minimise those risks. Risk assessments should be specific to the individual pupil and the activities in question. Proportionate risk management relevant to the disability should be an ongoing process throughout a disabled pupil's time at the school.

There might be instances when, although an adjustment could be made, it would not be reasonable to do so because it would endanger the health and safety either of the disabled pupil or of other people. There might be other instances where schools could make anticipatory reasonable adjustments in line with health and safety legislation, ensuring compliance with, and not infringing, that legislation.

Example: *'A disabled pupil who attends a mainstream school has a tracheotomy which needs monitoring and he needs occasional intervention to clear his airways. The school carries out a risk assessment and identifies that he needs to have a member of staff who is able to provide the necessary monitoring and intervention with him at all times. The school has several support staff who are trained and contractually obliged to administer medication to pupils. The school arranges for these staff and any others who volunteer to be trained in tracheotomy care and then timetables the trained staff so one is always able to monitor the pupil. All staff are trained in identifying when the pupil needs intervention and provided with radio microphones so that they can summon assistance from another member of staff if necessary. These are reasonable adjustments for the school to make in response to the risk assessment'.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Example: *A disabled pupil with a stair climbing wheelchair applies to a large secondary school with several flights of stairs. The school prevents him from using the stair climbing wheelchair in the school as they think it will be dangerous. However, after carrying out a risk assessment and finding out more about the wheelchair the school realises that it doesn't present a significant health and safety risk and therefore it would be reasonable for them to allow him to use it.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Charging arrangements for making reasonable adjustments

It is unlawful for a setting or school to charge a child for making reasonable adjustments in any circumstances, whatever the financial cost to the school and however the setting or school is funded.

Example: *An independent school provides a dyslexic disabled pupil with overlay sheets to assist him in reading text, and weekly sessions with a specialist teacher. The school adds the cost of these adjustments to the pupil's school fees. This would be unlawful discrimination.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

4. Increasing access to the curriculum

The County Council provides support to schools to help them implement their accessibility plans. This includes:

- Providing training and awareness opportunities to staff, governors and parents
- Sharing good practice
- Encouraging collaboration between groups of schools to share expertise
- Ensuring that schools are aware of support services that provide advice to schools and staff
- Providing specialist help to identify ways forward in increasing the inclusion of all pupils.

The [Inclusion Handbook](#) for schools contains detailed guidance on removing barriers to achievement and improving participation in the curriculum together with guidance on the equalities duties.

A range of directorate services are available to schools to provide advice on curriculum access, information about these services can be found on the intranet.

Advice and support to enable a fully inclusive experience and curriculum access for all pupils is provided in a variety of ways:

- subject-specific guidance;
- consultancy and training on all aspects of SEN, access and disability;
- school improvement advice;
- individual casework, consultation;
- written guidance;
- monitoring;
- Inset to individual schools or partnerships;
- countywide training and project development;
- teaching support.

Example: *A year 10 visually impaired pupil in Oxfordshire will need adapted papers for all public examinations. All subject teachers working with the pupil are aware of this and they make practice papers available to support staff at least two weeks ahead of use so that font, background, diagrams and tables can be appropriately modified in line with the adaptations allowed by the examination board. Trained and experienced TA's are made available on the day of examinations. Where papers can be opened early for modification, this happens in time for the pupil to access the paper with all the other students taking the examination.*

Example: *A year 4 pupil with cerebral palsy attends a mainstream school in Oxfordshire. To communicate the pupil uses eye-pointing, a communication book, and a Tellus communication aid. She has recently progressed to using an eye-gaze system which enables her to communicate with a much greater degree of independence. The school has made a number of reasonable adjustments to facilitate her communication. She has three trained part-time teaching assistants (TA) so that there is always someone available who knows how she communicates. One TA with confidence in using ICT has been given responsibility to lead the team in*

using communication technology in the classroom with the support of outside agencies as outlined on her statement.

Transition to school was well managed with the TAs given opportunities for training off site before the pupil arrived. A whole school staff awareness raising session was held so that everyone who came into contact with the pupil would know how to communicate with her. As part of this the pupil's mother and her speech and language therapist spoke about how to use her communication book, 'Look to Talk'. The school also encouraged the pupil's parents to talk to the school governors and to write an article about her way of communicating for all children and parents.

Staff use an observation book and are given time to meet weekly after school to discuss her targets, their observations and her progress. Liaison with external professionals is excellent. The school recognises the need for on-going staff training and the school team actively seek help when it is needed.

The outcome is that the pupil is very motivated, keen to be involved in school life and is able to communicate her views.

Specialist training, equipment and resources

Any specialist medical training school staff may require will be provided, monitored and supported by Oxfordshire's Shared Care Protocols for Children. The protocols support the care of children in any setting across disciplines and agencies in a safe and accountable manner.

The County Council works in partnership with the health services to provide a range of specialist aides, equipment and ICT to promote disabled pupils' access to the curriculum. We are committed to developing our partnerships with the health services and other agencies to seek opportunities for joint working and pooling of information and resources, to promote access to appropriate provision for pupils with disabilities. Our SEN Support Services (SENSS) are instrumental in forging these links.

Example: *There is joint working between occupational therapists and the SENSS specialist advisory teachers in providing specialist equipment to support access for children and young people with physical disability in mainstream settings. Specialist equipment that is not in educational use at any given time is stored alongside health equipment and is made available for home use through an equipment store.*

Example: *Health, social care and education funding is pooled for the provision of Communication aids. A specialist team within SENSS, works closely with therapy colleagues and the ACE centre to provide highly specialist multi-disciplinary assessment to inform provision of the most appropriate communication aid for each child. The communication aid is made available for use wherever the child is whether at school, out and about, or at home.*

Access to the extended curriculum and short breaks

An extended school is one that aims to meet the wider needs of children, young people, their families and the local community by providing a range of activities and services in addition to the taught curriculum, often beyond the school day. The Equality Duties apply to the extended curriculum.

Example: A primary school plans a school trip to a local history museum in their town to undertake some activities. One of the pupils in the class is deaf and as the museum does not have a hearing loop installed she will be unable to participate in the trip. The school decides to change the trip and attend a museum in a neighbouring town which has a hearing loop. Although this will cause some inconvenience to the other pupils as the travel time to and from school is longer, the school decides that this is a reasonable adjustment to make given the substantial disadvantage faced by the disabled pupil if she can't attend the trip.

Example: A disabled pupil requires assistance with personal care needs such as toileting, washing and dressing. This assistance is provided during the school day by his learning support assistant provided through his statement. The school arranges a residential school trip for his year group. The pupil wishes to attend but is not able to do so unless his personal care needs are met.
Applying the reasonable adjustments duties:

Is he at a substantial disadvantage? Yes, he is unable to attend the trip with his peers.

Could the disadvantage be avoided? The following options could avoid the disadvantage and enable the pupil to attend: asking his learning support assistant to go on the trip and provide support beyond the normal school day, liaising with social services to see if any support can be provided by them discussing with the pupil and his parents ways they think the support could be provided, such as a family member going on the trip to provide the overnight support.

Is it reasonable for the school to take these steps? These steps are all potentially reasonable depending on the circumstances. If it is not possible for the school to find a reasonable means of enabling the pupil to attend then it should consider whether there is an alternative equivalent trip that could be organised for that year group that the disabled pupil would be able to participate in.

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Short Breaks provide opportunities for disabled children and young people to spend time away from their families and have fun. They also provide respite for families, giving them a break from their caring responsibilities, activities range from an hour to a week residential holiday. [Oxfordshire's short breaks statement](#) describes what is available.

5. Improving the physical environment

A. Strategic approach

The County Council has adopted a strategic approach to planning for increased physical access to our schools for disabled learners. Since 2003 a programme of works has increased the number of accessible schools year after year, and an 'accessible schools' list is available on the intranet. The list is also partly made up of schools who have scored highly from their own accessibility self-audits. It is recognised that improving access may create disproportionate difficulties in a small minority of schools where it is not possible to make the premises fully accessible and alternative arrangements will be necessary.

Oxfordshire has a long history of policy implementation to promote access for disabled pupils. There is a strong track record in making good quality provision for disabled pupils who attend Oxfordshire schools. We will continue to utilise capital funding to improve accessibility to school buildings by adapting them as required for individual disabled pupils.

In identifying accessible schools and prioritising those for adaptations, we have:

- developed definitions of basic accessibility
- identified which particular categories of work the County Council will provide and which aspects schools are responsible for, and those which require a collaboration between the school and County Council (see Annex A).

B. Definition of basic accessibility

The minimum requirements for accessible provision in all schools are set out in the detailed design sections of the County Council's Provider's Manual and in Building Bulletin 102 'Designing for disabled children and children with special educational needs' and Building Bulletin 93 'Acoustic design for schools'. They set out in more detail the requirements for each phase of education provision but the general principles for this are:

- circulation routes as a basic requirement for accessibility;
- sufficient accessible toilet provision to meet the needs of pupils with disabilities with a minimum of one centrally situated accessible toilet and changing provision
- access to specialist areas: PE (sports hall), science laboratory, D&T, ICT and any other unique specialist facility provided at that school;
- access to general classrooms to be sufficient to timetable the curriculum. This may mean considering the management of space rather than adapting space to fit in with previously established practice, for example, using general teaching space for different subjects from one academic year to the next or for pupils in a different year group to fit in with the requirements of the individual with the disability;
- access to a quiet area or small group room;
- access to recreation areas, sports fields and social spaces;
- access to extended school facilities.

Many of our schools already have a high level of accessibility through the rolling programme of adaptations, through adaptations carried out for individual disabled pupils and through extensions and refurbishments. All new buildings will be fully accessible, as will any extensions and remodeled areas.

Schools will continue to be responsible for any adaptations required to comply with requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for the community hire of their premises. As a minimum, the adaptations should meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations and the British Standard 'code of practice' BS8300.

All schools should complete an annual self-audit questionnaire designed to assess the current accessibility of their premises. A blank copy of the questionnaire is published on the county council's intranet site.

C. The criteria for prioritising schools for adaptations

a) Schools where there are known pupils who require adaptations, and, where it is compatible with the efficient and reasonable use of resources, the partnership secondary school to which the primary pupils who require adaptations, are expected to transfer to.

b) The Schools Access Initiative Programme of works (2003-2011) identified schools to be adapted to meet minimum requirements of accessibility. The criteria for selection was based on:

- one secondary school per locality;
- a selection of primary schools which feed into these secondary schools
- schools that are co-located with special schools;
- schools that host resource bases which serve pupils with physical and sensory disabilities;
- schools that have greater accessibility as indicated in the self-audit questionnaires;

c) Where the provision of new schools is planned as part of the Capital Programme, these schools will be fully accessible and will therefore be regarded as the accessible school in their immediate geographical area.

It is recognised that there will continue to be the need for minor adaptations in schools to meet the needs of individual pupils. We will identify any schools receiving disabled children and which might require such building adaptations to facilitate access.

Where parental preference is expressed for a child to attend a school which is not yet regarded as accessible, we will investigate the adaptations required and work in partnership with schools and parents to identify an appropriate individual action plan which is compatible with parental preference and with the efficient use of resources.

D. Responsibility for adaptations

Increasing accessibility to school buildings is a partnership between the County Council and schools. The role of the County Council has been to create a network of accessible schools, but to achieve this we have used centrally held funding. Schools can use their Devolved Formula Capital allocations to carry out improvements. See Annex A for a schedule of works listing where the County Council or school is responsible.

Improving physical accessibility for specific needs

(a) Children and young people with hearing impairment

The improvement of the acoustic environment for children and young people with hearing impairment has benefits for all children and young people using the learning environment. Where resources permit, physical adaptations will be made to provide a quiet room for individual support work for children and young people with a significant hearing impairment. Similarly adaptations to improve acoustics in the child's classroom(s) and main assembly hall in primary settings will be put in place where reasonable and practical. Improving access to key curriculum areas at secondary phase and the main assembly hall will be a priority for secondary settings. Use will be made of the BB93 guidance in determining acceptable levels of ambient noise and reverberation times. Adaptations may include lowering of ceilings, use of wall paneling, provision of carpets and/or curtains, installation of a sound field system and provision of an FM system.

Classrooms and teaching areas within the Hearing Impairment Resource Bases have good acoustics and meet the BB93 regulations for classrooms used by hearing impaired children and young people. Where a school is co-located with a Resource Base the Authority has developed a system of working in partnership with the host schools to ensure pupils with a hearing impairment also have access to the full curriculum, for example, by ensuring a suitable number of classrooms achieve the required acoustic conditions. Sound field systems are installed in key curriculum areas.

Example: *A severely deaf year 9 pupil in Oxfordshire wears two hearing aids and has difficulty hearing when levels of background noise increase. The school timetables the pupil so that she can make use of sound field systems installed in key subject areas. Staff are trained in how to use the equipment in conjunction with the pupil's radio system and the interactive whiteboard. Teachers plan ahead when they are using DVD or video clips to support learning and support staff arrange for a written synopsis or transcript when subtitled resources are not available.*

(b) Children and young people with visual Impairment

Where an environmental audit is needed to assess the physical accessibility of a school setting for a visually impaired child or young person this will be carried out by a Rehabilitation Officer from the Sensory Impairment Team.

Recommendations are usually very specific to the individual child and setting and may, for example, include the painting of yellow lines to highlight trip hazards such as sloping edges, nosings on steps and bollards, changes to lighting, adaptations to windows to prevent them opening dangerously on to a visually impaired child, the addition of handrails or trails and Braille signage. The setting is responsible for making these adaptations unless major building work is required.

Example: *A visually impaired child requires printed handouts to be prepared in 16 point. This can easily be accommodated by ensuring that this is done prior to any documentation being printed.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

(c) Children and young people with physical disability

Physical adaptations are often specific to the needs of the individual child and are usually recommended following an assessment by an occupational therapist in consultation with a SENSS specialist advisory teacher. Adaptations may include installation of a lift, accessible doors, disabled toilet facilities including fixed hoists and changing beds and fire safety equipment. Adjustments may also be needed to a pupil's timetabling and room allocation so that access to a physically accessible room is available across the range of curriculum subjects.

Standards for new accommodation now reflect the needs of those with physical disability and sensory disability and can be found in the in detailed design section of the [County Council Property Consultants Manual](#).

Example: *A disabled pupil with ME finds moving around a large three storey secondary school very tiring and despite the school adjusting the timetable and location of classes to minimise the amount she has to move around the school she is still too exhausted to complete the school day. The school then makes further adjustments of having a 'buddy' to carry her books for her, a dictaphone to record those lessons which she misses and a policy that she will not be penalised for arriving at lessons late. These adjustments enable her to attend more lessons and to be less disadvantaged when she does miss lessons.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

Example: *A pupil who is a wheelchair user is therefore unable to access classes on the first floor. A reasonable adjustment would be for the school to re-arrange the timetabling and location of classes so all of her classes are on the ground floor. Although this may be difficult it does not mean it is not a reasonable adjustment for the school to make. If specialist facilities such as science labs are only available on the first floor then it may not be possible to move classes which require use of the specialist equipment to a different classroom, in which case the school will need to consider what other adjustments it could make to enable the disabled pupil to access equivalent learning opportunities to her peers.*

Equality and Human Rights Commission, Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils, 2012

(d) Children and young people with communication and interaction needs and those who need personalised learning approaches, including those with attention difficulties.

A variety of physical adaptations may be needed to facilitate full access to curriculum and learning opportunities, and to the social aspects of school life. Adaptations will vary and will need to be individualised to meet the particular difficulties of each child or young person. Children with autistic spectrum disorder have difficulty interpreting their surroundings and communicating and interacting with others. They need access to a calm, distraction free learning environment, which is predictable and easily understood, as the reduction in sensory stimulus helps to reduce anxiety and distress, (this will not always be possible for all lessons, but a quiet place could be made available as needed).

Children and young people who are withdrawn or isolated, disruptive or disturbing others may need extra space/opportunities to move around and to ensure a comfortable distance between themselves and others. Some may take extreme risks or have outbursts and need a safe place to calm down.

Environmental adaptations may include provision of an accessible, alternative teaching and learning space within the school to which children and young people can be withdrawn, or can withdraw themselves, should the classroom environment become overwhelming or present sensory challenges.

Presentation of school related information in a coherent visual format to support comprehension and retention of information can also help, for example, colour coding the doors of subject teaching rooms in line with exercise books and timetables.

Planning for new accommodation and adaptations need to consider sensory sensitivity, space for personalised learning approaches, and calm supportive environments.

Example: *A year 6 pupil with autism, anxiety and attachment disorder experienced significant difficulties with learning and coping in her mainstream school. Her level of anxiety was such that she had not used the toilet in school for some time. Enhanced input was given by SENSS to support her transition into secondary education. Following the advice of the autism advisory teacher, and with regular input from a learning mentor, the school worked diligently to make a range of adaptations to reduce her anxiety, e.g:*

- *Access to the disabled toilet*
- *Staff always speak as calmly as possible, even in the most urgent/demanding situations*
- *A colour-coded timetable (e.g. green for positive work, behaviour) was created to provide visual reminders of good efforts/achievements.*
- *Homework mainly allowed to be completed at school.*

There has been a significant improvement in her well-being and social confidence. She now attends the after school film club and was very keen to go on a cinema outing. She has been interacting well with some of her peers, her social skills are improving and the focus is now on her academic targets. At the last review her mother was close to crying with relief and delight at how well she is doing.

6. Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils who require support accessing written information.

In today's modern society the provision of information is now accessed and available in a variety of printed, spoken and electronic forms. We believe in effective communication and therefore publish a range of guidance to support our strategies for promoting accessibility:

Large print

Written material should be produced in a minimum of 12 point and printed in a plain font. However, for some visually impaired colleagues and customers, this may not be sufficient. The Visual Impairment Support Service can give advice and support about producing accessible versions.

Easy Read

This format was originally developed for people with learning disabilities, but now has a wider user group. It uses large print with illustrations and can be supported by audio. The language is reduced in complexity and jargon.

Braille and other Alternative Formats

SENSS will work in partnership with schools and other agencies to provide access for children with specific impairments or disabilities to a range of human, paper and electronic sources of information, including:

- Provision of specialist access equipment for pupils with severe communication difficulties including members of the Deaf community. This will include:
 - Text phones, and video telephone systems.
 - Certain information in video format requiring both subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL) sign interpreting services as well as live voice.
 - Certain information access requiring the provision of BSL interpreting services across a number of levels for a range of information contact points.
- Access to provision via specialist access equipment for pupils with severe visual impairments e.g. Braille facilities, signage, talking/text reading facilities. In addition, certain information access will require the provision of audio tapes services across a number of levels for a range of information contact points; e.g. the circulation of public information.
- Access for pupils with severe sensory impairments to information via electronic media; internet/websites. This will include sign language translation/subtitles, large print and talking print versions.
- Access for pupils with severe sensory impairments to paper based published information e.g. large print and Braille, audiotapes video interpreting facilities.
- Access to information for disabled children when English is not their first language via translations into their preferred format.
- In addition there are a small number of children who will have both sensory impairments and English as an additional language. This group will require additional and specialist facilities and services which reflect a combination of the above strategies.

There is an interpretation service for Deaf people in Oxfordshire funded by the Health Service. It includes British Sign Language/English, Sign Supported English or similar for case conferences and home visits, any health needs (e.g. GPs, hospital appointments), or educational needs (e.g. parent/teacher meetings, school open evenings for students or parents who are sign language users).

The interpretation service can also advise staff on best formats for letters to people who use BSL as their first language, or video-letters.

SENSS will give initial and recurrent training and support schools to:

- raise awareness of what the needs of this client group are;
- inform them of existing Oxfordshire County Council and SEN Support Services, in relation to access and the provision of information;
- advise them on what adjustments need to be made to ensure full access to information for all, including information, advice and support to children, young people, parents and schools about the use of ICT to support access to information.

7. School Accessibility Plans

The Equality Act 2010 and Equality Duty 2011 placed responsibilities upon schools to remove discrimination against pupils with disability. It requires schools to make “reasonable adjustments” to their policies, procedures and practices to accommodate pupils with disability more fully in school life. There is a duty on schools to state what action they have taken to improve access and to have an Accessibility Plan.

A school’s duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one and therefore schools need to think in advance about what disabled pupils might require and what adjustments might need to be made for them.

School Accessibility Plans

An Accessibility Plan should aim to:

- increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can engage in the school **curriculum**;
- improve the physical environment of schools to increase disabled pupils’ **physical access** to education and extra curricular activities;
- improve the delivery of **information** to disabled children and young people, using formats which give better access to information.

The responsibility for the Accessibility Plan lies with the governing body and Headteacher. The Local Authority provides advice on the production of access plans. Planning should start with the information that is already held by the school regarding the nature of the pupil population and the school’s strengths and weaknesses in ensuring access for disabled pupils. Oxfordshire’s [SEND Review](#), a self-evaluation tool for educational inclusion provides a useful starting point.

Further advice and guidance on drawing up an Accessibility Plan is also available on the Teachernet website.

A range of directorate staff is available to deliver training and to provide advice and support to schools. There are specialist courses for staff and governors.

The Ofsted framework strengthens the requirements relating to equality of access and narrowing the gap in achievement. Governors should report annually on the impact of their school’s arrangements for children with SEN and other vulnerabilities and progress made implementing the accessibility plan.

“Ofsted inspectors discuss with each school how it is meeting statutory requirements and evaluate and report on the impact of the school’s actions. This might include a school’s accessibility plan as part of the evidence.” ***Inspecting equalities: briefing for section 5 inspection: September 2012: No. 090197***

8. Implications for School Admissions

Our aim is for children with disabilities who are starting school to have a place in a suitably accessible, nearby, primary school which feeds into an accessible secondary school. This will enable such pupils to have an agreed pathway for their education. To support this aim, it is the County Council's policy to prioritise disabled children in admissions. Our third over-subscription criterion is "Disabled children who need to be admitted to a school on the grounds of physical accessibility". This applies to 'community' and 'controlled' schools; Aided, foundation and trust schools set their own criteria.

We will identify disabled children at the pre-school and transfer stages and use this information to inform the allocation of their school places, in consultation with their parents. We will keep our admissions policy under review and amend this as appropriate to ensure ongoing compliance with the Act.

Since September 2002 it has been against the law to discriminate in school admissions, education and associated services and exclusions. Parents have means of redress through admissions and exclusions appeals and [Special Educational Needs and Disability tribunals](#) which now sit in the Health, Education and Social Care (HESC) Chamber of the First-Tier Tribunal.

9. Involving children, young people and their families in the development of the strategy

Oxfordshire is regarded as an outstanding authority in terms of our participation and engagement with children, young people and their families. We have a well-established history of consultation with schools and the Dioceses, and will build on our existing work to comply with our equality duties.

Consultation took place with young people with disabilities on the formulation and development of the initial strategy. This now takes place as part of the Children and Young People's Plan consultation mechanisms, including the Children and Young People's Survey and from individual responses and recommendations made during Annual Reviews of statements of Special Educational Needs. Throughout the development and review of previous school accessibility plans, young people continue to develop a powerful voice in advising teaching staff on how best to make reasonable adjustments for the benefit of pupils with disabilities.

Some examples include:

- Active participation by children and young people on the autism spectrum with the Oxfordshire Autism Board, including co-chairing.
- Involvement of the SENSS Childrens' Rights group in developing the online questionnaire for use in schools as part of the Anti-Bullying Strategy.
- The use by SENSS of an exit interview when children and young people leave school to inform future service developments.
- Therapists working with children and young people to develop leaflets for children and young people to describe what their therapy might involve.

10. How we will review the effectiveness of this strategy

We will review the effectiveness of this strategy using a variety of means including:

- monitoring the number of schools that meet the minimum standards for accessibility;
- monitoring the admissions to County Council maintained schools, as required by the Special Educational Needs (Provision of Information by LEAs) Regulations 2001;
- monitoring the effectiveness of the SEN School Access Planning Group to ensure that at phase transfers children with physical and sensory disabilities are able to transfer to appropriately adapted local schools;
- monitoring and evaluation undertaken as part of Oxfordshire County Council corporate systems for reviewing access and service provision;
- evaluation of Directorate strategic plans, including the Children and Young People's Plan, service plans and team plans;
- feedback from parents/carers, and voluntary organisations;
- Feedback from children and young people;
- Monitoring outcomes from Social and Community Impact Assessments.

ANNEX A – Funding physical adaptations

Where physical alterations are planned, the funding responsibility will rest with either the school/LA or both, depending on the nature of the work and in line with current asset management priorities and the strategies for change for primary and secondary schools. In achieving a partnership approach to the requirements of legislation, an agreement regarding the respective responsibilities of schools and the LA was agreed through previous strategies. This annex outlines sources of funding and gives details of Oxfordshire's financial partnership between the LA and schools for funding access works.

1. Sources of funding

Funds available to support the strategy will be from a number of sources, which are outlined below.

Capital Programme Funding (Schools Access Initiative)

The Schools Access Initiative (SAI) funding is made available by the County Council to improve the accessibility of mainstream schools for disabled pupils. The funding is available for use in community and voluntary controlled schools.

It is intended to continue to allocate these funds in line with the strategic approach to improving access to schools outlined in this strategy. If, as part of the Admissions process outlined in the strategy, it is agreed that the LA will part fund adaptations for an individual pupil (from SAI funding), we expect that this will be subject to negotiation with the school in line with the table below.

Specific SAI allocations have not been made available for use in VA schools in Oxfordshire, but funding can be made available as part of the Locally Controlled Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP).

Capital Building Projects (LA Capital Programme and Schools Devolved Capital Budget)

The specification for capital building works at schools, commissioned by the LA has been updated to reflect the latest legislation and the latest County Council policies on provision of facilities for disabled people. The specification is subject to regular review. All works commissioned by the County Council will be subject to this.

Repair and Maintenance Budgets (LA and Schools Devolved Budget)

The [County Council Property and Facilities Consultants Manual](#) has guidance on repairs and maintenance.

2. Who will pay for what?

Consultation on the financial partnership between schools and the Directorate was held with the Dioceses, AMP Consultation Group, Schools Forum and Fair Funding Group in 2003. The outcome of this consultation was in favor of the introduction of a system of financial thresholds. Schools will fund those items identified in their plans that do not need LA joint funding. Schools will be expected to continue to improve access through repair

and maintenance work that becomes necessary at the school. They will also be expected to fund the provision of most specialist equipment and fittings e.g. ICT, specialist furniture, carpets, curtains, signage and other smaller items of work. Schools will be expected to pay the first £250 for each item of specialist equipment required by pupils with a disability, and any additional LA contributions will be subject to agreement by the SEN case officer or appropriate health practitioner in Children & Young People Service. Typical adaptations to improve physical access that the school should be able to fund itself are identified below. This list of adaptations is not exhaustive.

Financial Thresholds

It is expected that schools will carry out works identified in their access plans as far as their funds permit. Schools can use DFC allocations as referred to above and any other funds at its disposal for capital and revenue building works.

Typical Adaptations Required For Individual Disabled Pupils

Adaptation	Responsibility
Ramps	OCC
Installation of lifts including building works	OCC
Create accessible toilets/changing areas	OCC
Install/replace doors to meet requirements for wheelchair access	OCC
Automated door openers	OCC
Grab rails and handrails over and above the needs of other pupils	OCC
Drop kerbs	OCC
Use of portable sound fields where required	OCC
Provision of designated withdrawal areas for one to one lessons with due regard to acoustics	OCC
Repairs and maintenance to doors	School
Install viewing panels at various heights to doors for increased visibility	School
Adaptations to entrance matting/trip hazards/flush door detail	School
Level car park/fill potholes	School
Replace car park line markings for disabled car park spaces	School
Basic induction loop for a reception area	School
Install audio link/call bell from main entrance door to reception area	School
Visual and tactile warning signs for various requirements – to include Braille signs where required, position of visual indicators	School
Redecorate wall/ceiling finishes with colour differentiated schemes	School
Improved signage throughout the site and buildings	School
Use of appropriate lighting, blinds, whiteboards with matt finish	School

اشكال بديلة لهذا المنشور موجودة حسب الطلب. هذه تشمل لغات مختلفة و الطبعة البارزة وطريقة بريد و اشرطة كاست و اقراص الحاسوب او البريد الالكتروني.
Arabic

আপনি যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে এই পুস্তিকাটি বিকল্প ছাঁদে, যেমন, অন্য কোনও ভাষায়, বড় হরফে, ব্রেইলে, অডিও-ক্যাসেটে, কমপিউটারের ডিস্কে বা ইমেলের মাধ্যমে পেতে পারেন।
Bengali

“本刊物備有其他的格式可供索取。這些包括有其他語言版，大字版，盲人用版，錄音帶版，電腦磁碟版或電子郵件版。”
Chinese

प्रार्थना करने पर यह प्रकाशन दूसरे रूपों में प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। जिस में सम्मिलित है, दूसरी भाषाओं में, बड़े छापे में, ब्रेअल, सुनने की टेप पर, कम्प्यूटर की डिस्क पर या ई-मेल द्वारा।
Hindi

“ਇਹ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ। ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਛਾਪੇ ਤੇ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਵਿਚ, ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਟੇਪ ਤੇ, ਕੰਪਿਊਟਰ ਡਿਸਕ ਜਾਂ ਈ ਮੇਲ ਤੇ।”
Punjabi

”اس اشاعت کو متبادل اشکال میں درخواست کرنے پر حاصل کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ اس میں دوسری زبانیں، بڑا پرنٹ، بریل (جسے اندھے چھو کر پڑھ سکیں)، آڈیو کیسٹ، کمپیوٹر ڈسک یا ای میل شامل ہیں۔“
Urdu

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Polish

Schools Accessibility Strategy

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