

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS – ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2017-2020

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update to the Children and Young People Scrutiny on the progress to date against the delivery of the Special Educational Needs Accessibility Strategy 2017-2020 [the Strategy] and the actions required to comply with legislation.

Summary

2. Whilst the Strategy does not form a part of the Council's Policy Framework it is a statutory requirement as required by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 [the Act] for the Local Authority to prepare an Accessibility Strategy [the Strategy] in relation to schools for which it is the responsible body¹ [the Duty]. The Strategy was therefore approved by Council in 2017.
3. The Strategy (2017-2020) is available on the Local Offer:
<https://livingwell.darlington.gov.uk/Services/649>
4. The Strategy sets out how the Local Authority will work with schools to:
 - increase the extent to which disabled children and young people can participate in the school curriculum;
 - improve the physical environment of schools;
 - improve delivery of information to pupils with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

¹ Described in the Act as “Responsible body” means—

(a) in relation to a maintained school or a maintained nursery school, the Local Authority or governing body;

(b) in relation to a pupil referral unit, the Local Authority;

(c) in relation to an independent educational institution [F2 or an alternative provision Academy that is not an independent educational institution], the proprietor;

(d) in relation to a special school not maintained by a Local Authority, the proprietor.

5. The summary of local government statutory duties, DFE_166, explains that the Duty came into force on 1 October 2010 replicating duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Under this same legislation all schools need to have Accessibility plans which should be reviewed every three years.
6. The Local Authority responsibility under the SEND Code of Practice 2014 states that *'The Local Authority has made regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010), to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled children and young people when carrying out their functions', and, 'The Local Authority has published information to demonstrate their compliance with this general duty and published objectives which are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound to achieve the core aims of the general duty'*.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that :-

- (a) Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny note the updated Accessibility Strategy.
- (b) Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny note the progress in implementing the Strategy and steps to support schools embed Accessibility even further.

Suzanne Joyner
Director of Children and Adults Services

Background Papers

Special Educational Needs Accessibility Strategy 2017 – 2022 Revised October 2018

Eleanor Marshall : Extension 6134

S17 Crime and Disorder	No recommendations from this report
Health and Well Being	Support schools to provide accessible facilities, environment, curriculum and information to enhance children's life chances and opportunities to thrive. This includes prevention and early intervention.
Carbon Impact	Schools are both encouraged, and where works are undertaken by the Local Authority in support of accessible environments, that these are done with the highest regard to sustainability and aim to reduce the carbon footprint and environmental resources.
Diversity	The principles of inclusion, (equality and diversity) are set out in the Strategy. Schools should work with parents, carers and the wider community to create greater understanding of differences and to remove barriers and potential barriers to participation and achievement.
Wards Affected	The maintained schools and settings to which this Strategy applies are: Redhall and Lingfield (Redhall Primary School), Whinfield (Whinfield Primary School), Pierremont (George Dent Nursery School), North Road (Rise Carr Pupil Referral Unit and Harrowgate Hill Primary School) , Park East (Borough Road Nursery School) Eastbourne (St Teresa's RC VA Primary School)
Groups Affected	Children and Young People at maintained schools and settings.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	Yes - This Strategy affects more than one ward.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Children with the best start in life Enough support for people when needed
Efficiency	The outcome of this report will enable the Council to support maintained schools in the most efficient manner to improve their Accessibility plans.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report presents a Strategy that will benefit all Children regardless of being Looked After or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Since implementation of the Strategy, Darlington Borough Council has been working to ensure that the vision for children and young people with SEND is realised and to help all educational settings identify and achieve their own aims. This includes the development of a revised draft SEND Strategy.
9. The adoption of the Children and Young People's plan has also taken place since the adoption of the Accessibility Strategy.
10. The Accessibility Strategy has therefore been updated in line with these updated Plans/Strategies, and in line with the updated data.
11. Since implementation of the Strategy Darlington Borough Council has been monitoring its use in maintained settings. The DFE states that fewer than 50% of schools have Accessibility Plans. (National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network – Feb 17). Following implementation of the Strategy 100% of our maintained settings have produced Accessibility Plans that are available on the school websites.
12. Monitoring has been supported by development of an audit tool and specific and targeted support to maintained schools.
13. Darlington Borough Council also developed a Traded Service for Academies providing advice and guidance through working with schools to use the audit tool and in delivery of bespoke training.
14. Darlington Borough Council has received some key messages from supporting and guiding educational settings in their development of Accessibility Plans which underpin this strategy:

Awareness

- There is strong evidence of good inclusive practice and educational settings have been encouraged to develop case studies to support these

Curriculum Access

- All staff benefit from regular updated training in order to understand and act on the additional needs of children and young people with SEND
- Children and young people with SEND want to be included in trips and clubs

Physical Access

- Some educational settings have older buildings with particular access issues (eg no lifts) and are working towards identifying creative solutions to maximise access for children and young people with SEND

Information and Advice

- Ongoing opportunities for participation and co-production with parents and children and young people to inform developments

15. The following priorities have been identified as support and training for settings that is required on an ongoing basis:
 - Awareness of the Equality Act 2010 (Schedule 10 specifically)
 - Use of the Accessibility Audit Tool to support educational settings in assessing their compliance with ALL relevant legislation and Codes of Practice
 - Linking the Plan and SEND report to the Local Offer
 - Adhering to the anticipatory duty

- Ensuring the inclusivity of all overall policies and practices
- Reviewing and revising Accessibility Plans and SEN reports in partnership with stakeholders
- Celebrating the strengths of all children and young people