




ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2023 – 2026

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Signed:	
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REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	March 2012
2	Front Cover ONLY updated to take account of revised Statutory Policy Guidance issued by the DfE	January 2013
3	Reformatted only	February 2014
4	Reformatted only	February 2015
5	Reformatted only	May 2017
6	Very minor updates AND 'Date Complete' added to all Action Plans (Appendices)	September 2018
7	Reviewed – links checked	October 2019
9	Reviewed with minor restructuring and updated to include information relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty	September 2023

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1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Sex Discrimination Act.

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act in several ways. The overriding principle of equalities legislation is generally one of equal treatment. However, the provisions in relation to disability are different in that you may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person.

There are some minor differences around disability in the new Act when compared with the previous legislation.

- The Equality Act does not list the types of day to day activities which a disabled person must be unable to carry out to meet the definition.
- Failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be justified. The fact that it must be 'reasonable' provides the necessary test.
- Direct discrimination against a disabled person can no longer be justified (bringing it into line with the definition of direct discrimination generally).
- From September 2012 schools and local authorities are under a duty to supply auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments where these are not being supplied through a statement of SEND.

As in previous legislation a school must not discriminate against a pupil because of something that is a consequence of their disability.

It is unlawful for a school to treat a disabled pupil unfavourably. Such treatment could amount to:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Discrimination arising from a disability
- Harassment

Direct discrimination can never be justified but a school could justify indirect discrimination against a disabled pupil, and discrimination arising from a disability, if the discrimination is the result of action that is a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

2. Definition of disability

Under the Equality Act 2010: a person has a disability if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment,
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial.
- 'Long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions).
- 'Normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.

It should be noted that this definition is *not just regarding physical difficulties* but also covers a wide range of:

- Sensory difficulties
- Learning difficulties
- Impairment resulting from, or consisting of, a mental illness

In addition, there is a range of 'hidden impairments' such as

- Dyslexia
- Speech and Language Impairments
- Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Impairment does not itself mean that a pupil is disabled, but rather it is the effect on the pupil's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in one or more of the following areas that has to be considered:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical coordination
- 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

Progressive conditions considered to be a disability

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions. People with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with some visual impairment are automatically deemed to be disabled.

Conditions that are specifically excluded

Some conditions are specifically excluded from being covered by the disability definition, such as a tendency to set fires or addictions to non-prescribed substances.

3. Reasonable adjustments

We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils:

- When something we do places a disabled pupil at a substantial disadvantage to other pupils, we must take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- We will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so, and where such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to their non-disabled peers.

A failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be justified. The test is whether the adjustment is reasonable, and if it is, then there can be no justification for why it is not made. We will not be expected to make adjustments that are not reasonable.

The Act does not set out what would be a reasonable adjustment or a list of factors to consider in determining what is reasonable, however, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) provides further guidance in its publication [EHRC Reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils](#). It will be for us to decide the reasonableness of adjustments based on the individual circumstances of each case. Factors to consider may include the financial or other resources available, the effectiveness of the adjustment, its effect on other pupils, health and safety requirements, and whether aids have been made available through the SEND route.

The reasonable adjustments duty is intended to complement the accessibility planning duties, and the existing SEND statement provisions, under which Local Authorities are required to provide auxiliary aids and services where a statement details that provision. When a disabled pupil does not have a statement of SEND (or the statement does not provide the necessary aid) then the duty to consider reasonable adjustments and provide such auxiliary aids will fall to the school.

Under the Equality Act we do not have a duty to make alterations to the physical environment though we should be planning to do so as part of our accessibility planning.

4. Public sector equality duty (PSED)

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (section 149 of the Equality Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty applies to public bodies (including schools) and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people's needs.

The PSED is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to

- publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty at least annually; and
- set and publish measurable equality objectives, at least every four years.

All information must be published in a way which makes it easy for people to access it and the published information must show that the public body had due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

These are generally described as the three aims of the Equality Duty. Our accessibility plan has been developed to help us to effectively meet our obligations under the PSED and ensure that users of our service who have a disability are not disadvantaged when accessing our curriculum, physical environment or the information which we provide.

5. Aims of the accessibility plan

We strive to ensure that the culture and ethos of the school are such that, whatever the abilities and needs of members of the school community, everyone is equally valued and treats one another with respect. Pupils should be provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and value diversity.

In Dowdales School, we have a commitment to equal opportunities for all members of the school community and our Accessibility Plan outlines our intention to remove barriers for disabled pupils and to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the different areas of the national curriculum.
- Increase access to extra-curricular activities and the wider school curriculum.
- Improve the physical environment of school to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- Improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

This Accessibility Plan will, therefore, **begin the process of addressing the needs of disabled people** through specific targets. Attached is a set of action plans showing how the school will address the priorities identified in the plan.

The Action Plan for physical accessibility relates, in part, to the Conditions Survey (access section) of the School, which is undertaken regularly by the Local Authority. It may not be feasible to undertake some of the works during the life of this Accessibility Plan and therefore some items will roll forward into subsequent plans. The Plan will be revisited prior to the end of each first three-year plan period in order to inform the development of the new Plan for the following period.

6. Key objectives

The key objectives of our Accessibility Plan are as follows:

- To reduce and eliminate barriers to access to the curriculum and to full participation in the school community for pupils, and prospective pupils, with a disability.
- We are committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.
- We are committed to providing all pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, differentiated and adjusted to meet the needs of individual pupils and their preferred learning styles; and we endorse the key principles in the National Curriculum Framework ([Click here to access](#)) which underpin the development of a more inclusive curriculum:
 - Setting suitable learning challenges.
 - Responding to a pupil's diverse learning needs.
 - Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

7. Contextual information

Dowdales is a community school with approximately 820 students aged 11 – 16 years on roll and 133 staff.

The school consists of several buildings on a single site. The original school building was the former Ashburner Mansion and has three floors. This still provides teaching facilities but also acts as the administrative centre and reception. The main school building has three floors with a gross floor area of 5800m². A science block is attached to the main building. Teaching facilities are provided in the CIAO building (two floors), Sports Hall and Muse (both single story buildings).

As a predominantly white school within a predominantly white community we see the importance of being outward looking, providing knowledge and understanding of a multicultural community paramount. We continually look for different ways of understanding and celebrating diversity both in the curriculum and through assemblies and the vast amount of work done via our PHRSE programme including International School status. Personal development – educational visits play a large part here.

8. Development of the plan

8.1 Vision and values

At Dowdales we:

- *Have high ambitions for our disabled pupils and expect them to participate and achieve in every aspect of school life.*
- *Are committed to identifying and then removing barriers to disabled students in all aspects of school life.*
- *Value the individual and the contribution they make to all aspects of school life.*
- *Will strive to ensure that our disabled pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum and teaching resources so as to develop fully in their education.*

- *Acknowledge a commitment to embrace the key requirements set out in the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement.*
- *Will continue to focus on removing barriers in every area of the life of the school.*
- *Are committed to embracing equal opportunities for all members of the school community.*

8.2 Information from pupil data and school audit

Key starting points for the school's plan:

- The school has identified that we have, as at the start of the academic year 2023/2024 169 students regarded as having a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act. These students consist of ADHD (5), ASC (19), HI (2), VI (1), Phys/Med (8), MLD/SLD (15), SEMH (25), SPLD (64), DLD (7), Speech, Language and communication difficulties (22), ESL (1).

ADHD = Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

ASC = Autism Spectrum Condition

DLD = Developmental Language Disorder

ESL = English as a Second Language

HI = Hearing Impairment

MLD = Moderate Learning Difficulties

Phys/Med = Physical/Medical

SEMH = Social, Emotional & Mental Health

SLD = Severe Learning Difficulties

SpLD = Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia/Dyscalculia/Dyspraxia)

VI = Visual Impairment

(Some students have been diagnosed with one or more needs)

- ***Our annual development plan considers the needs of our diverse student population as well as the needs of its wider community.***
- Through dialogue with the Local Authority agencies tasked with supporting those students in its areas with disabilities, numbers of students with a disability currently in feeder primary schools who may wish to come here are identified.

In order to ensure that our data is up to date and accurate we will:

- liaise with the Local Authority so as to identify and therefore plan a response to students with a disability well before they arrive;
- improve the information dissemination from our Learning Support facility;
- implement a system that allows parents to inform us if they themselves have a disability;
- identify early on in their school career any obstacles to the effective learning of disabled students;
- use all available data to inform the planning of individual student learning patterns;
- use information supplied via previous LA Conditions Surveys/Accessibility Audits to assist us to develop an action plan to reduce obstacles for the school community.

8.3 Views of those consulted during the development of the plan

In the development plan we will:

- ensure the development of the plan involves coordination with the Local Authority in line with the LA Accessibility Strategy and ensure that we provide the best choices for students wanting to enrol here;
- consult the full governing body/SEND governor/relevant sub-committee;
- consult staff including specifically SENCo, heads of year/department, safety committee;
- set up a structure to allow the views of students, both able and disabled to be taken into account;
- consult with parents/carers to ascertain their views on our provision for disabled students and any developments they feel would be of use to the students and also offer parents alternative ways to communicate with school;

- involve outside agencies who already exist to assist disabled students in their education and future careers;
- ensure the views of ALL those consulted are taken into consideration and the plan modified where reasonable to meet the needs of stakeholders;

9. Scope of the plan

9.1 Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum

- To investigate how the access to those areas of the curriculum that are normally difficult for disabled students to access can be improved;
- To further investigate what support or alternative approaches can be adopted to increase the choice/participation of disabled students;
- To investigate alternative provision/routes and collaboration that will assist disabled students to learn including liaison with the LA Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Statementing and Provision Team.

We plan to increase access to the **curriculum** for pupils with a disability, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with a disability are as, equally, prepared for life as are the able-bodied pupils. This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or off-site visits. It also covers the provision of specialist **aids and equipment**, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum. The school will continue to seek and follow the advice of LA services, such as specialist teacher advisers and SEND inspectors/advisers, and of appropriate health professionals from the local NHS Trusts.

In order to improve access to a full, broad and balanced curriculum and to ensure that teaching and learning is accessible through school and classroom organisation and support, especially deployment of staff, timetabling, curriculum options and staff information and training the school will plan and implement.

Adjustment to access, dependent on individual needs and which may be provided through the SEND framework. The accessibility strategies and plans will help to ensure that schools are planning and preparing to respond to the particular needs of individual students.

This may include Governors giving consideration of:

- whole-school ways of increasing participation in activities such as after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities, as well as off-site visits, particularly for difficult-to-include student groups, such as those with physical or behavioural challenges;
- how threats to participation have been analysed using risk assessment proforma and action taken to reduce those identified risks;
- identifying how classroom support arrangements, such as deployment of teaching assistants, provision of ICT, contribute to, and enhance learning opportunities;
- deciding how the implementation of specific strategies such as flexible or shared timetabling, nurture groups, counselling provision, access to therapy, first day absence response, have enhanced attendance and participation;
- how classroom/group organisation has been targeted to ensure that all students achieved increased levels of school success;
- description of action to increase curriculum choice and/or flexibility has enhanced the access to appropriate qualifications/attainments;
- the school response to students through the application of the SEND Code of Practice has improved student attainment and how effective communication regarding specific student needs has been achieved and is monitored;
- how liaison, increased communication and relationships with external agencies has supported and enhanced students' access to the curriculum and how this is monitored and improvements targeted;

- identifying how staff training needs in order to effectively meet the diverse abilities and disabilities of all students, including prospective students who may require manual handling, signing, personal hygiene support etc. has been identified and supported;
- identifying student peer support mechanisms and the ways that the school has ensured student have a voice in decisions that affect them;
- taking action to ensure that disabled members of the school community are seen in a positive light through publications promoting disability and providing positive role models of adults with disabilities to encourage success and achievement;
- ensuring that action has been undertaken to ensure that parents and carers see themselves as partners in their children's education and are increasingly willing to actively support their children's education;
- enhancing the positive culture and ethos of the school by undertaking quality marks or other additional intervention to improve the schools ability to include those with disabilities.

9.2 Improving the school's physical environment to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services

- In consultation with the LA (where necessary and appropriate) investigate various improvements to the site.
- Improve accessibility points to different curriculum areas.
- Investigate ways of making the site more accessible to both disabled parents and adult users.

The school will take account of the needs of pupils and visitors with physical difficulties and sensory impairments when planning and undertaking future improvements and refurbishments of the site and premises, such as improved access, lighting, acoustic treatment and colour schemes, and more accessible facilities and fittings. This is required regardless of whether the school has pupils or visitors with disabilities and is preparation for a situation when they do.

The Governing body will want to consider and record reflection upon all areas of the physical environment such as:

- Changes to improve access to doors, stairs, toilet, changing facilities, and consideration of the impact of signs, colour schemes and colour contrast, lighting, heating etc.
- Changes outside of the school/setting building e.g. provision of disabled parking etc.
- Management and organisation issues such as maintenance of lights, fire alarms appropriate to those with hearing impairments etc.
- Increased access to and maintenance of, auxiliary aids, ICT apparatus such as computer hardware/software.
- Improvement to the acoustic environment that might include installation of soundfields/hearing loop systems.
- Improvements of storage implications for wheelchairs and other mobility devises.
- Application and progress on capital funding for major access works funded by the Schools Access Initiative through the Local Authority, and details on schools funds delegation to support targets such as provision of suitable floor coverings, furniture and layout of the playgrounds.

9.3 Improving delivery of information that is provided in writing for disabled pupils

We will strive to:

- produce all school literature at the correct font size to help visually impaired students;
- investigate alternative ways of providing access to information, software and activities;
- investigate ways of communicating effectively with disabled parents and carers and other disabled adult users of the site.

The school plans to improve the delivery of **written information** to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities. Examples include handouts, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events. The information will be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable time frame. The school will make itself aware of local services, including those provided through the LA, for providing information in alternative formats when required or requested.

Over this next academic year we will prepare an information plan consistent with the aims and objectives of the accessibility plan, this will be monitored and reported to the governors.

This part of the duty covers planning to make information normally provided by the school in writing to its students – such as handouts, timetables, textbooks, information about school events – available to disabled students, using assisted technology where possible. This will include alternative formats such as Braille, audio tape and large print and also the provision of information orally, through lip speaking or sign language, through a recognised symbol system or ICT. This information should also be made available within a reasonable time frame and take account of the students' disabilities and students' and parents' preferred formats.

The Governors will achieve this by:

- Informing readers that school published material is available in a selection of formats e.g. Braille, Makaton, audio tapes and identifying how they can access this provision if requested.
- Considering how to increase information accessibility for those who have English as an additional language or other communication impairments, at school meetings etc.
- Identifying how they have considered the readability of information including that provided by the school website, and how it is monitored to ensure accessibility to a wide range of diverse needs and abilities.
- Identifying how textbooks and other student information are selected and provided to meet a diversity of student needs.
- Ensuring the monitoring of effectiveness of adult support to enhance the opportunities for students/parents who have difficulties in accessing information.

9.4 Financial planning and control

The Head teacher with the Business Manager and Senior Management Team, together with the Finance Committee will review the financial implications of the School Accessibility Plan as part of the normal budget review process. The objective is that over time School Accessibility Plan actions will be integrated into the School Development Plan.

We will finance the plan by identifying costs and incorporating them into current and future budget commitments and we will seek support from the LA as and when appropriate.

10. Implementation

10.1 Management, coordination and implementation

Dowdales School Leadership Team will consult with staff, students and parents with regards to accessibility (refer to Section 8.3)

As a result, we shall:

- produce action plans, with definite time scales for the implementation of the actions implicit in the plan;
- provide support and information so staff can understand and buy into the Accessibility Plan and not see it as a bolt on;
- present the plan to the governing body for their approval;
- modify the plan based on the views of stakeholders;
- review the plan and the associated action plans to see if milestones are being met on an annual basis.

10.2 Monitoring

We recognise that monitoring is essential to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not being disadvantaged, and that monitoring leads to action planning.

We monitor inclusion of students with disabilities, their physical access to all subjects, differentiated teaching to allow progress and inclusion in the wider school.

This is monitored by the SENCO and the deputy headteacher and where appropriate, the local authority, through EHCP meetings for individual students.

Action plans are produced as and when required.

10.3 The role of the LA in increasing accessibility

Dowdales School will work with the Local Authority to ensure the successful implementation of their accessibility plan (where relevant).

10.4 Accessing the school's plan

We will ensure that the plan is available in different formats where requested.

The school will achieve successful implementation of the accessibility plan with continued support in the areas of:

- providing training and awareness opportunities to staff, Governors and parents/carers on issues regarding equality and inclusion;
- providing targeted training for particular groups of students/staff;
- promoting collaboration through the provision of information and the sharing of good practice;
- encouraging liaison between other local schools/settings including special schools;
- seeking support/advice from outside the school, from services, other agencies and organisations;
- ensuring that the school is aware of all support services that provide advice to schools and staff.

11. Related policies

The Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with the following policies, strategies and documents:

- Equality Scheme/Objectives
- SIP for SEND & Inclusion
- Health & Safety
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Educational Visits & Activities
- Behaviour Management
- Complaints Procedures

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DOWDALES SCHOOL

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 – 2026

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM

Target	Strategy	Outcome	Timeframe	Achievement	Date Complete
Access to all curriculum areas	Ensure the lift is operable at all times. Ensuring gulley above is cleaned and cleared bi-annually to ensure there is no water ingress, which would render the lift inoperable.	Lift is always in working order	Ongoing		
	Ensure the stairlifts in school are maintained and serviced on a regular basis so that they are operational at all times.	Stairlifts are always in working order	Ongoing		

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IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT						
AMP or AA Report Ref. (if relevant)	Item	Activity	Timescale	Cost £	Responsibility	Date Complete
	Staircases	Colour contrasted stair nosings and handrails to both sides of staircases (internal and external)	Identified areas will be prioritised and worked through as time and budget allows		Dowdales	
	Metal grate covers on the paths and walkways around school	Non slip paint applied to prevent those with crutches slipping on the metal cover if they walk over it.	Summer 2024	minimal	Dowdales	September 2024

DOWDALES SCHOOL

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2023 – 2026

IMPROVING ACCESS TO WRITTEN INFORMATION

Target	Strategy	Outcome	Timeframe	Achievement	Date Complete
Availability of written material in alternative formats.	We will explore way to meet individuals needs with regards to communication. Use of assisted technology to help with the reading and writing of information.	The school will be able to communicate effectively with all.			
Make available school brochures, school newsletters and other information for parents in alternative formats	Review all current school publications and promote the availability in different formats for those that require it	All school information available for all			