

# **Hampshire County Council Children's Services Department**

## **Accessibility Strategy 2008 to 2011**

### **Introduction**

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 to cover education. In addition to its duties under SEN legislation, since September 2002, the Local Authority has had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

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

Hampshire County Council published its original strategy in 2003 and this is now due for review. This revised strategy, covering the period 2008 – 2011, sets out how the Local Authority (LA) plans to increase access to school education for disabled pupils, in the schools for which it is responsible. The strategy covers the three areas required by the planning duties in the DDA:

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

This strategy takes into account significant changes in national policy both towards schools and local authorities and towards children and young people with disabilities and their families. There is a recognition that the achievement of the Every Child Matters outcomes for all children cannot be delivered by any one school operating in isolation. Thus there is now a focus on collaborative working between schools and partner agencies through such developments as the extended services and Children's Centre agenda, education and behaviour improvement partnerships, the 14-19 curriculum, school sports partnerships and specialist schools' community plans. Identifying and

removing barriers to access and participation must take into account extended services, new ways of working and new approaches to curriculum delivery in and around partnerships of schools, both mainstream and special.

Since December 2006, there has been a legal duty on all public sector organisations to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people, referred to as the Disability Equality duty. This requires local authorities and schools to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

### **Aiming High for Disabled Children:**

The three priority areas for improving outcomes for disabled children in 'Aiming high for disabled children: better support for families',

- empowerment
- responsive services and timely support
- improving quality and capacity

require improved access to information, facilities and inclusive activities and opportunities. This is reinforced by Public Service Agreement 12, which includes a new indicator based on parents' experiences. By 2011, this strategy should enable disabled young people and their parents to report a more favourable experience of curriculum participation, education and associated services and the information that is made available to them. This strategy complements, and is consistent with, the key elements of the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme.

## **Removing Barriers to Achievement:**

This strategy sets out the government's vision for enabling children with special educational needs to realize their potential and to improve provision for children with disabilities and special educational needs. The strategy proposes action in four key areas:

- early intervention: to ensure that children who have difficulties with learning receive help as soon as possible and that parents have access to suitable childcare. This will need greater co-ordination between health, education and social services in dealing with young children with SEN and disabilities
- removing barriers to learning: to ensure that more and more children with SEN attend mainstream school and are able to participate fully in school life. This will need specialist expertise and resources to support them in school
- raising expectations and achievement: by developing teacher's skills and strategies for meeting SEN children's needs
- developing improvements in partnership: including consistency in management of SEN, delegated funding to schools and greater integration of education, health and social care in meeting the needs of children and families.

The Accessibility Strategy complements, and is consistent with, the key elements of the Removing Barriers to Achievement Strategy.

### **I. Starting points:**

#### **1A. The purpose and direction of the local authority's strategy: vision and values**

This policy contributes to the delivery of the priorities, values and key policy commitments of Hampshire County Council:

##### **The corporate priorities:**

- Hampshire safer and more secure for all
- maximising well-being
- enhancing our quality of place.

##### **The corporate values:**

- removing barriers to opportunity and improving choice for all
- responding to the improvements that people say they want
- planning for and inventing the future
- encouraging partnerships, participation and contribution.

### **The Children and Young People's Plan commitment:**

- to working with special schools and mainstream schools with specialist provision to improve the range and quality of their provision and to build the capacity of mainstream education to further reduce and remove barriers to participation and learning.

### **The Maximising Wellbeing in Education Policy:**

Hampshire County Council is committed to maintaining a high quality, comprehensive and inclusive education system offering choice and diversity in which every learner:

- is given appropriate support to access education fully
- is accorded equal worth, protected from harm and enabled to be healthy
- respects and accords equal worth to others and acknowledges one another's rights and responsibilities
- enjoys learning and is enabled to achieve well
- is equipped with the values, knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to live life to the full.

Hampshire County Council believes that the following principles should guide educational provision for all learners in all educational settings:

- Schools and colleges are learning communities with cultures that promote and support effective teaching with active and participative learning
- The school or college ethos places a high value on developing self-esteem and ensuring that learning takes place in a stimulating, purposeful and creative environment.
- The curriculum is broad, rich and innovative, so that it is responsive to the different learning needs of every child and young person and delivers their entitlement to appropriate education and training
- There is excellence in attainment and achievement with high aspirations and an entitlement to good progress for all
- Timely and appropriate information is shared and used between and within schools and other appropriate agencies to inform effective learning
- All children and young people are supported to overcome barriers to learning. Their learning moves at a challenging but realistic pace
- Good behaviour is promoted and poor behaviour is managed well

- The school or college works in close partnership with parents and other partners and demonstrates a commitment to its local community.

From the earliest years to higher and adult education, every learner in Hampshire will be given opportunities to develop high self-esteem, respect for others and positive and socially responsible behaviour, enabling them to play a full and happy role in society.

**For children and young people with disabilities this means that:**

- education providers have a responsibility to ensure that everyone in Hampshire can participate fully in any learning opportunity
- there should be a continuum of provision to meet a continuum of need
- all children and young people should receive high quality education that meets their needs in their local communities through varied and flexible provision

The County Council has also committed to the Every Disabled Child Matters Local Authority Charter, included within which is an assurance that the Local Authority will work towards making;

“all universal services, including extended schools and children’s centres, accessible to disabled children.”

**1B. Information from pupil data and school audits**

**Priorities for the development of data and information:**

- work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to ensure health data better informs strategic planning
- develop work with the Joint Information Link (JIL)
- work with the Access team to complete the school accommodation and sites audit
- improve provision of information on pre school children with SEN and ensure appropriate information exchange at key points of transition.

**1C. Views of those consulted during the development of the strategy**

Initial consultation on the policy was undertaken with two groups; children and young people who are likely to be directly affected by the policy and parents/carers of children and young people who are likely to be affected by the policy.

With regard to the first group, 19 schools were approached and asked whether they would be prepared to hold a facilitated

discussion with pupils about accessibility issues. Copies of the letters to headteachers, and parents/carers and a copy of the questionnaire used with pupil groups are attached at Appendix 1. The schools were a mixture of primary and secondary special schools, primary and secondary mainstream schools with resourced provision and a mainstream primary school.

Thirteen schools replied to the consultation exercise and their responses were collated, analysed and summarised. The summary of responses is attached at Appendix 2. The summary of responses will be used to inform the direction and priorities of the Accessibility Strategy.

Letters and a questionnaire were also sent to representatives of parent/carer groups. Copies are attached at Appendix 3. The responses were collated, analysed and summarised and the summary information will be used to inform the direction and priorities of the Accessibility Strategy. A summary of responses is attached at Appendix 4.

## **2. The main priorities in the local authority's strategy**

### **2A. Increasing access to the curriculum for disabled pupils**

Guidance is available both nationally and locally to support schools and pupils to increase access to the curriculum. Key documents include the National Curriculum 2000 which highlights, in its inclusion statement, how schools might address the needs of disabled pupils; 'Supporting the targeting setting process' published by Department for Education and Schools/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (DfES/QCA) and many documents available via the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) National Strategies.

In the past three years the LA has continued to provide guidance and resources to enhance curriculum access for all from the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS), the Hampshire Education Psychology Service (HEPS), the Specialist Teacher Advisory (STA) Service and the SEN Service. Furthermore, a summary of progress and availability of provision, training and resources for key areas of special educational need have now been published, as position statements, for the following:

Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN); Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD); Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD); Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD); Physical Disabilities (PD); Hearing Impairment (HI); Visual Impairment (VI); Severe Learning Difficulties/Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SLD/PMLD); Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD); Early Years; and Pupil Participation. In addition:

- Resourced provision in mainstream schools has developed still further with additional provision for VI, and BESD. A pilot provision for pupils with high functioning autism and complex additional needs has opened in 2007 in the south west area. Plans are in hand to develop a further comparable provision in the north by 2010 and to open a third resourced provision for secondary ASD in the South East by 2010
- Training is identified in the position statements but is also developing according to school and pupil needs. Portsmouth University and the University of Winchester are involved in providing and validating local authority courses
- Early Years provision for disabled pupils continues to develop and is a priority for growth in the next financial cycle, 2008-2011. Locality teams and behaviour support teams are in place across the authority and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support has improved since 2005, through joint funding initiatives and feedback from local implementation groups
- National Strategies initiatives including the waves of interventions, the Behaviour and Attendance strategy and the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative, have been introduced and are well embedded in the best practice schools
- School wide local developments have included a focus on Dyslexia Friendly Schools and Good Autism Practice materials to assist schools with self evaluation
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Information Communication Technology (ICT) support for disabled pupils is now available within the STA Service and through outreach from the primary school for pupils with physical disabilities
- The local authority's "Well-being in Education Policy" (2007) highlights the key function of a creative curriculum accessible to all, to support progress, attainment and well being
- All schools have increased awareness of the need to consult pupils, parents and the wider community in evaluating their curriculum provision. The summary of these findings are commonly recorded in the school's self evaluation document (SEF), providing the authority with feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of different aspects of provision in schools, including access to the curriculum
- Schools now have a duty to promote Disability Equality. Training has been arranged by the Local Authority to assist schools in planning to meet this requirement and to produce appropriate action plans

- As part of the roll-out of the development programme for Children's Centres across the county, consideration has been given to the access needs of disabled children and their families
- National expectations in relation to curriculum development, for example 14-19 diversity, extended schools initiatives and education improvement partnerships, are being implemented within the authority and will have a marked impact in the next 3 years on access to the curriculum for all pupils. During this process ongoing consideration will be given to the needs of disabled children and their families through appropriate impact assessments.

#### **Priorities for increasing access to the curriculum:**

Key priorities for action include:

- the ongoing development of resourced provision
- further development of outreach services from special schools, across the county. These schools will be base funded from April 2008 to provide support to mainstream schools to improve access to the curriculum for disabled pupils
- the development of consultation techniques with pupils, parents and the wider community
- multi-agency liaison and joint initiatives
- increasing the awareness of, and provision for, children and young people with severe learning disabilities through the Every Disabled Child Matters Charter and the Aiming High for Disabled Children initiative
- the list of priority developments produced by the SEN County Advisory groups and by the SEN Service.

## **2B. Improvements to the physical environment of schools**

**What has been done so far?**

### **Resourced provision for pupils with Physical Disabilities (PD) and Sensory Impairments:**

- The strategy for access for disabled pupils in resourced PD provision commenced in the early 1990's with four secondary schools strategically located across the County. They have received considerable investment over the years to enable the inclusion of pupils with more complex physical disabilities. The guiding principle at these schools is that the entire school premises should become accessible to disabled pupils
- As accessibility standards are continually improving, as are standards such as fire safety, the focus over the last two years has been to identify and complete a range of planned access

improvements to bring these four resourced secondary schools up to current Building Regulations standards. The authority has installed evacuation lifts, improved hygiene rooms and therapy suites, and provided a range of powered doors across campuses as well as improved external routes

- Since the last LA Accessibility Strategy, a second tier of ‘accessible’ secondary schools has also been established, to improve accessibility to a number of existing mainstream secondary schools located in areas of the County, thus reducing travel distances and giving greater choice for disabled pupils and their parents. These schools accommodate smaller numbers of disabled pupils, and the pupils are more likely to have less complex physical disabilities/health needs. To date two schools have been adapted, enabling access to all curriculum areas with improvements including: evacuation standard lifts, accessible toilets, hygiene rooms and therapy suites. Further schools are in the process of being identified as future ‘accessible’ secondary schools
- Listening and learning environments for deaf and hearing impaired pupils in HI resourced provision have been improved through Schools Access Initiative (SAI) funding. There are, currently, 11 resourced provisions across the county. Acoustic works have been carried out in some of the resource bases and in some mainstream classrooms. Soundfield systems have been fitted, where appropriate, and improvements have been made to lighting to enhance lip-reading opportunities
- There are three resource bases (two primary and one secondary) for children with VI. Modifications have been made to school buildings to make them accessible to VI children, including provision of rooms for tutorials and preparation of materials and adaptations such as provision of blinds and highlighting of hazards such as steps and pillars.

#### **Using the Schools Access Initiative funding to make a difference:**

- The SAI fund is an annual grant from the DCSF given to LAs to improve accessibility in mainstream schools for disabled pupils. Although this is not the only funding stream used to include access improvements within schools, it is the route through which most planned improvements are made to the accessibility of school premises
- Over the financial 2006/7 and 2007/8, £4.2 million of SAI funding has been invested on improving the accessibility of some 15% of Hampshire schools. The funds are largely spent strategically, ensuring a good geographical spread of accessible

schools across the county, although about 5% of the budget is set aside to fund pupil-specific projects

- Pupil-specific projects are generally smaller adaptations, e.g. ramped access to a classroom. Specialist Teacher Advisors (STAs) help to identify the need for both strategic and pupil-specific projects in conjunction with the SAI Strategic Working Group. Wherever possible the disabled pupils who are directly affected by access improvements schemes, and their families, are involved in the design process, with advice also coming from other professionals such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

#### **What standards of accessibility do we work to?**

- The standards that Hampshire schools are improved to are set out in a the Schools Inclusion Design Brief (<http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/department/strategy/accessibility/appendixh.pdf>). In the absence of detailed national guidance, the brief was published in 2003 in partnership with the Inclusion branch of the DCFS, Gloucestershire County Council and Swindon Borough Council. It is regarded as a best practice document on access to the built environment in mainstream schools.
- British Standard 8300:2001 is also used as this generally sets a higher standard of accessibility than the minimum standard set out in Approved Document Part M (Building Regulations).

#### **How do we identify where access improvements are needed?**

- Specialist Teacher Advisors work closely with architects and surveyors from Property Services to help identify necessary physical access improvements
- On an annual cycle, the SAI Strategic Working Group ensures that all proposed access improvements are consistent with the County wide strategy for mainstream schools. These schemes are then discussed and finally approved by elected members of the County Council.

#### **Priorities for improvements to the physical environment:**

- Over the last ten years, many pupil-specific access improvements have been incorporated into schools e.g. the installation of accessible toilets. Since 2003/04, pupil-specific access improvements have continued alongside a more strategic approach to adaptations to schools. The intention is to create a spread of accessible schools throughout the county
- To assist with this process, the local authority is in the process of undertaking a comprehensive data gathering exercise on the current levels of accessibility across all schools. Data was first assessed in 2001/2 based on self audit forms completed by schools. A more comprehensive Asset Management process is

now in place which includes, for 2008/09, Schools Accessibility Mapping (SAM). SAM identifies where schools are located, which schools they link with and what accessible facilities each school contains. This data will be combined with data and knowledge from the STAs and the SEN service to draw together a detailed analysis of the demographics of pupils with disabilities. This will provide a strategic picture, area by area, to inform future access improvement schemes

- Once the SAM data gathering process is complete, an on-line tool highlighting where accessible facilities exist across Hampshire's mainstream schools will be available. Although still in development stage, it is envisaged this will assist the parents of disabled children in making informed preferences about a suitable local mainstream school for their child.
- A new service has been developed to assist schools with the planning of physical access improvements over time. Schools now complete a self-audit form backed up by supporting information on accessibility issues (<http://www.hants.gov.uk/pbr/access/advisoryservice.html>). All schools will receive a DDA Advisory Session which focuses on physical access improvements in their Accessibility Plan, timescales and priorities leading to more robust Accessibility Plans and greater consistency of approach towards improving physical and sensory access in schools.
- Involving disabled people in improving the physical and sensory access to school premises remains an important priority area. This strategy intends to build on existing good practice by supporting ongoing partnership arrangements with local Access Groups (which consist of volunteers with a personal experience of an impairment who often bring knowledge about a range of impairments). Local Access Groups campaign for better access in their local areas and, given the extended schools agenda, this provides a unique opportunity for both the LA and schools to better understand the access needs of disabled community users. In addition, disabled pupils (as well as their parents, carers and other relevant professional staff) will, wherever possible, be involved in the detailed design of planned access improvements. The intention is to build in more formal review processes of access improvement schemes so that this can feed into internal design guidance documents such as the School Inclusion Design Brief.

## **2C. Improving the provision to disabled pupils of information that is provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled**

The local authority provides access to information reformatting services including Braille, audio tapes, ICT and pictorial, large print and plain text for all Hampshire schools and works in partnership

with the voluntary, independent and non-maintained sectors, as appropriate, to provide support.

The provision of accessible and responsive information is essential in order to secure and enhance partnership by involving children, young people and their families in the planning, development and evaluation of services.

### **3. Making it happen**

#### **3A. Management, co-ordination and implementation**

The Accessibility Strategy will be co-ordinated and implemented through the existing SEN and Disability infrastructure, provided through the Children's Services Department.

#### **3B. Accessibility of the strategy itself**

The Accessibility Strategy will be published to schools via the Schools Communication process. It will also be published on the Hampshire County Council web-site. Hard copies of the Strategy document will be available from Hampshire County Council Local Offices.

## Glossary of Terms

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Education
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BESD	Behavioural, Social and Emotional Difficulty
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
HEPS	Hampshire Education Psychology Service
HI	Hearing Impairment
HIAS	Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service
ICT	Information Communication Technology
JIL	Joint Information Link
LA	Local Authority
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PD	Physical Disability
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SAI	Schools Access Initiative
SAM	Schools Accessibility Mapping
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEF	School Evaluation Form
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLCN	Speech and Language Communication Needs
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulty
STA	Specialist Teacher Advisor
VI	Visual Impairment