



Mill Water School

Preparation for *their* best future

Accessibility Policy and Plan

Introduction

Mill Water School is a community special school for pupils aged 3-19 with complex needs. Pupils have a wide range of learning difficulties including profound and multiple difficulties, severe learning difficulties, physical difficulties, sensory impairments, communication difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions. All pupils have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The school has a wide catchment area as it is the only special school in East Devon. In January 2015, we moved to a purpose built school in the grounds of Bickton College. The pupils come from a variety of socio- economic backgrounds. The pupils are predominately white British. The school has an APN of 100 but is oversubscribed, with 114 pupils on roll.

We believe that this Accessibility Plan is compliant with current legislation and requirements as specified in Schedule 10, relating to disability, of the Equality Act 2010. School governors are accountable for ensuring the implementation, review and reporting on progress of the Accessibility Plan over a 3 year period.

We recognise that:

- Schools and LAs must not treat disabled pupils less favourably and take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage (the “reasonable adjustment” duty).
- The Local Authority and school governors have the duty to publish Accessibility Strategies and Plans.

Vision Statement

Preparation for *their* best future

Mill Water School strives 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 treated with respect. Pupils are provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and value diversity.

Mill Water School is accessible, inclusive and has close links to the local community. It is a school where diversity is celebrated and strong partnerships built. The curriculum provides challenging and stimulating learning experiences, with realistic yet high expectations of standards, progress and achievement for all.

Mill Water School will support pupils to:

- Make appropriate decisions and choices.
- Build effective relationships.
- Prepare themselves for the challenges of independent living and change.
- Develop a positive self-image and awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- Be active participants in their learning.
- Learn to be effective communicators.
- Enhance their social understanding and the skills of citizenship.
- Manage their own behaviour appropriately.
- Enjoy life.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

This plan covers all three main strands of the planning duty:

1. Improving the physical environment of school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services.

This strand of the planning duty covers aids to improve the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education. The physical environment includes steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces and paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting, ventilation, lifts, floor coverings, signs and furniture. Aids to physical access include ramps, handrails, lifts, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, adjustable lighting, blinds, induction loops and way-finding systems.

Physical aids to access education covers ICT equipment, enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept keyboards, switches, specialist desks and chairs and portable aids for children with motor co-ordination and poor hand/eye skills such as extra robust scientific glassware and specialist pens and pencils.

In maintained schools the provision of a special piece of equipment or extra assistance will be made through the EHCP framework and to a lesser extent through the planning duty that applies to all schools. The distinction between auxiliary aids and services provided through the EHCP route and those provided under the planning duty is that the EHCP duties relate to the individual, whereas the planning duty relates to the provision of aids or services in terms of the population (and future population) of the school. For example, a pupil with visual impairment might have low vision aids provided through the EHCP but the school might as a general measure provide blinds and adjustable lighting through the planning duty.

2. Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools' curriculums.

This strand of the planning duty will help to improve access to a full, broad and balanced curriculum. It covers a range of elements including ensuring 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.

Schools are expected to plan to improve progressively access to the curriculum for all pupils although many adjustments to access will be dependent on individual needs and may be provided through the EHCP framework. The accessibility strategies and plans will help to ensure that schools are planning and preparing to respond to the particular needs of individual pupils.

3. Improving the delivery of information to pupils with disabilities.

This part of the duty covers planning to make information normally provided by the school in writing to its pupils – such as handouts, timetables, textbooks, information about school events – available to all pupils. This will include alternative formats such as Braille, audio tape and large print, symbols 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 pupils' disabilities and pupils' and parents' preferred format.

Access and School Policy and Procedures

We adhere to Equality Act of 2010 throughout all our policies and practice to ensure pupils access learning and the school environment.

Access to the Curriculum

We ensure all pupils can access activities that we offer and adaptations to equipment and activities are made to fulfil this aim. For pupils to access the curriculum, lessons are highly differentiated and take account of individual learning difficulties. Priority is placed on pupil participation, as independently as is possible. Adults are clear about the learning objectives of the lesson, class and individuals.

We support good communication by the use of signing, symbols and low and high tech communication aids. Pupils who need them have AAC devices. All pupils have access to appropriate computer technology.

A school nurse, part time physiotherapists, occupational therapists and a designated speech and language therapist work alongside staff and parents to ensure that we meet the physical needs of our pupils. We use sensory approaches for children with sensory impairments.

Our minibus is designed to take wheelchairs to ensure no child misses out on school activities that take place off site. As a school we encourage independence in our pupils and strive to ensure that they experience full and rewarding lives.

The school will continue to seek and follow the advice of LA services, such as specialist teacher advisers and SEN inspector/advisors, and appropriate health professionals to ensure barriers to learning are reduced and enable pupils to reach their full potential.

Access to the School Environment

The building was purpose built in 2015 with good facilities for a variety of needs. The school is fully accessible for all pupils, staff and visitors. The school has a fully accessible hydrotherapy pool, specialist therapy room, sensory rooms and rebound room. The outdoor environment is also fully accessible with early years having a designated outdoor learning space. The school has laid new

paths with specialist matting to allow all year round access. The school has a wheelchair accessible tree house in the orchard area.

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.

Access to Information

All information issued by the school aims to be user friendly. Newsletters will incorporate photographs. All statutory and relevant information will be posted on the school website.

Local and timely information will be shared with parents via our school Facebook page and, where appropriate, via Instagram.

Makaton signing, PECS and AAC devices are used throughout the school to support pupils' communication, reading and understanding. Signing workshops have been offered to parents.

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.

School Access Planning

All parts of the school are fully accessible.

AIMS

Mill Water School aims to include all pupils in the full life of the school.

Our strategies to do this will include:

- Having high expectations of all pupils.
- Finding ways in which all pupils can take part in the full curriculum including sport, music and drama.
- Planning out-of-school activities including all school trips and excursions so that all pupils can participate.
- Setting admissions policy and criteria that do not discriminate against any pupil or treat them unfairly.
- Devising teaching strategies that will remove barriers to learning and participation for pupils.
- Planning the physical environment of the school to cater for the needs of all pupils.
- Raising awareness of disabilities amongst school staff (teaching and non-teaching) through a programme of training.
- Providing written information for pupils in a form that is user friendly.
- Using language which does not offend in all our literature and making staff and pupils aware of the importance of language.
- Examining our library and reading books to ensure that there are examples of positive images of disabled people.

MONITORING

Mill Water School recognises that monitoring is essential to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not being disadvantaged and that monitoring leads to action planning.

We will monitor:

- Admissions
- Attainment
- Attendance
- Effects of pastoral strategies
- Rewards
- Sanctions
- Exclusions
- Response to teaching styles/subject
- Setting/groups
- Post 16 destinations
- Selection and recruitment of staff
- Governing body representation
- Parents attending consultation meetings
- Parents' involvement in the life of the school (representation on PTFA, attendance at parents' meetings, in the classroom, school productions, whole school events, etc)

OTHER SCHOOL RELATED POLICIES

Equality for all pupils is included as an explicit aim in all of the school's policies and is supported by the school's other policies including:

- Equality
- Behaviour
- Admissions
- School Improvement Plan
- Policies for offsite activities
- Inclusion

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN CHECKLIST FOR GOVERNORS

How does the school deliver the curriculum?

<i>Do you ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary training to teach and support disabled pupils?</i>	
Strengths All new staff participate in the school's induction programme as detailed in the Induction Policy. Support staff have a six-month probationary period during which they attend two probation meetings, at which their progress and training needs are discussed on a 1-1 confidential basis. All staff have annual performance management meetings during which training needs are identified. There are five INSET days throughout the school year for staff training. One hour per week is set aside for class/whole school CPD. Training records are held electronically, and hard copies of signing-in sheets and certificates are held in the school office.	Areas for improvement

<i>Are your classrooms optimally organised for disabled pupils?</i>	
Strengths New, purpose built school (opened 2015)	Areas for improvement
<i>Do lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve?</i>	
Strengths The school offers a differentiated curriculum based on the individual needs of pupils. All pupils have Personal Learning Goals (PLGs). Data analysis identifies individual pupil progress.	Areas for improvement
<i>Are lessons responsive to pupil diversity?</i>	
Strengths See above. The school's differentiated approach is evidenced in planning. The school's approach to diversity is evidenced in its vision, 'Everyone is Valued', and in its four key aims.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class?</i>	
Strengths Pupils often work in small groups or with one to one support, and all teachers demonstrate in their planning differentiation for cohorts of pupils within their class.	Areas for improvement
<i>Are pupils encouraged to take part in music, drama and physical activities?</i>	
Strengths Pupils are able to access a range of physical activities through use of the hydrotherapy pool, Sidmouth swimming pool, the school hall and the Sports Barn at Bicton College. Further outdoor activities take place using the Bicton College grounds. Cohorts of pupils participate enthusiastically in Devon organised competitive SEN Sports Events such as athletics events, cricket and football competitions, swimming galas. Enrichment includes music and choir activities.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do staff recognise and allow for the mental effort expended by some disabled pupils for example using lip reading?</i>	
Strengths Staff take an individualised approach to pupils, e.g. allowing processing time, or producing individual timetables. Staff are trained to recognise when a task has reached its end for a particular child and will provide other distractions/activities for that pupil. Tasks are broken down into short bursts with frequent breaks, if appropriate.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do staff provide alternative ways of giving access to experience or understanding for disabled pupils who cannot engage in particular activities, for example some forms of exercise in physical education?</i>	
Strengths Pupils follow personalised programmes and specific activities for pupils are evidenced in teachers' planning. The school is equipped with a light room, dark room, rebound room and hydrotherapy pool, and hoists make these fully accessible. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy programmes are in place for those pupils who need them. Special yoga classes are organised for those pupils who would most benefit from this form of intervention. Some identified pupils attend Riding for the Disabled sessions.	Areas for improvement

<i>Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for students with disabilities?</i>	
Strengths Bespoke computer technology is in use by pupils across the school. iPads and laptops are available throughout the school. Smart boards are available in all classrooms. Pupils who need them have AAC devices to assist with communication.	Areas for improvement
<i>Are school visits made accessible to all pupils irrespective of attainment or impairment?</i>	
Strengths Pupils have regular school trips of varying duration, which occur with due regard for the health and safety of pupils. These range from 'out-and-about', shopping and local visits, to residential trips such as trips to the Calvert Trust. The school participates in sports events organised within the county or by SENTient Trust. Our Christmas Carol Concert takes place at a local church with all pupils being able to attend, irrespective of disability. Wheelchair users can use the school minibus.	Areas for improvement
<i>Are there high expectations of all pupils?</i>	
Strengths The differentiated curriculum and Personal Learning Goals mean that all pupils are challenged to achieve, commensurate with their level of ability. The school's vision, 'Everyone is Valued', and four core aims, clearly set out expectations for both pupils and staff. The school's Equality Objectives set out the expectation that the behaviour and safety of pupils will be judged 'outstanding'.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?</i>	
Strengths Staff take a flexible and responsive approach, reshaping planning and activities in response to pupils' learning needs in the classroom.	Areas for improvement

Is the school designed to meet the needs of all pupils?

<i>Does the size and layout of areas – including all academic, sporting, play, social facilities, classrooms, hall, canteen, library, and outdoor sporting facilities and playgrounds allow access for all pupils?</i>	
Strengths New, purpose built school opened 2015, planned to allow access for all pupils. The wheelchair accessible tree house has been completed. We have a wheelchair accessible swing in the main playground. Lower playground developed in Summer 2021 to include bike track and more robust climbing and play equipment to develop core strength.	Areas for improvement The school's sensory orchard is still being developed. The Early Years playground is being enhanced (Summer 2022)
<i>Can pupils who use wheelchairs move around the school without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, toilet facilities and showers?</i>	
Strengths See above. Building Works carried out in Summer 2017 means that fewer disabled toilets open onto public areas. There is greater access to adapted changing facilities and hoists for those children who need them.	Areas for improvement

<i>Are pathways of travel around the school site and parking arrangements safe, routes logical and signed?</i>	
Strengths See above.	Areas for improvement
<i>Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform ALL pupils?</i>	
Strengths Fire/evacuation drills take place every term. Any areas for concern are logged and appropriate action is taken.	Areas for improvement
<i>Could any of the décor or signage be considered to be confusing or disorientating for disabled pupils with visual impairment, autism or epilepsy?</i>	
Strengths New, purpose built school opened 2015, planned to allow access for all pupils. Block colours and clear hand rails aim to reduce disorientation.	Areas for improvement The edge of steps in our outdoor areas are going to be painted orange to improve visibility for pupils with VI (2022)
<i>Are areas to which pupils should have access well lit?</i>	
Strengths All areas are well lit and regularly checked and maintained.	Areas for improvement
<i>Is furniture and equipment selected, adjusted and located appropriately?</i>	
Strengths Furniture and equipment is selected, adjusted and located with due regard for pupils' needs.	Areas for improvement

How does the school deliver materials in other formats?

<i>Do you provide information in simple language, symbols or large print for pupils or prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information?</i>	
Strengths A Total Communication approach is used within the school and is reviewed regularly by the Communication Lead and Speech and Language Therapist.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do you ensure that information is presented to groups in a way which is user friendly for pupils with disabilities e.g. by reading aloud, overhead projectors and describing diagrams?</i>	
Strengths Information is presented to groups and individual pupils with regard for their needs and abilities.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do you have the facilities such as ICT to produce written information in different formats?</i>	
Strengths The school's Communication Lead, with the Speech and Language Therapist, regularly reviews the school's use of ICT for communication. A designated Communication/Resources Assistant produces resources in several different formats according to the needs of individual pupils. Pupils who need them have AAC devices.	Areas for improvement
<i>Do you ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist pupils with disabilities?</i>	
Strengths See above.	Areas for improvement