



Accessibility Strategy for Schools

2018 - 2020

Document Title: Accessibility Strategy 2018-2020

Summary

Publication Date	May 2018
Related Legislation / Applicable Section of Legislation	The Children and Family Act 2014; The Care Act 2014; and The Single Equalities Act 2010
Related Policies, Strategies, Guideline Documents	The SEND Code of Practice 2014
Replaces	Accessibility Strategy October 2015
Joint Strategy (Yes/No)	No
Name of Partner(s) if joint	N/A
Strategy Owner	Clare Linfitt, SEN Services Manager
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Review of Strategy

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Review undertaken by	Clare Linfitt, SEN Services Manager
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Document Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version Number
Sponsor	Roz Danks, Head of Education Services and Strategic Lead for Education	May 2018	V3
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1.0 Introduction and Context

North East Lincolnshire Council is intent on improving access to learning for all children and young people with a disability through better planning of the physical environment but also through better curriculum access and information provision. In writing the Accessibility Strategy full consideration has been given to the requirements of the Council's Corporate Equalities Strategy to ensure a full commitment to practices that value diversity and promote equality. It compliments North East Lincolnshire Council's strategic priorities including the:

- NELC's Outcomes Framework
- Joint Commissioning Strategy
- The Local Offer
- Families First Prevention and Early Help Strategy
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Education Strategy
- Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs
- North East Lincolnshire LSCB Guidance and Procedures,

This document is focussed on the parts of the Equality Act 2010 relating to disabled children and young people and their access to schools maintained by North East Lincolnshire Council and to academies within the local authority.

The local authority will keep in mind the key principles including:

- Inclusion is a process by which schools, early years settings, post 16 establishments, local authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include all children/young people;
- An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and incorporates the views of parents/carers and children/young people;
- The interests of all children/young people must be safeguarded; schools, early years settings, post 16 establishments, local authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.

1.1 Visions and Values

The local authority is committed to improving the quality of provision and outcome for all learners across the Borough. This is a continuous process aimed at identifying and removing barriers to the **presence, participation** and **achievement** of **all** children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

Presence is concerned with whether children and young people attend school regularly and arrive punctually and safely. It is concerned with whether they are

offered full access to a broad, balanced and personalised curriculum with their peers and full opportunities to be included in extra-curricular activities. This requires a sufficiently flexible and appropriate learning environment within a range of provision. It should take account of and aim to support the preferences of parents/carers and children for attendance at a local school or other educational setting where that is the most appropriate placement to secure their participation and achievement.

Participation is concerned with the extent to which the quality of children and young people's educational experiences contributes to their self-esteem and feeling of involvement and belonging. It relates to the perception of parents/carers and children and young people about the service that they receive and whether their views, beliefs and values are taken into account.

Achievement is concerned with the full range of learning outcomes of children and young people *across the whole curriculum*, both inside and outside the classroom. In this way, *achievement* is defined much more broadly than *attainment* and takes into account the rates of progress made by children and young people given their starting points.

1.2 Remit and Scope of the Accessibility Strategy

This document has been written in accordance with the local authority's duty under equality legislation to prepare an accessibility strategy, describing how the local authority will work with schools and early years settings that provide government funded early education places to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' and early years' curriculums;
- Improve the physical environment of schools and early years settings;
- Improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils and their families.

The Accessibility Strategy complements existing local authority plans and strategies, including the SEN Strategy 2018. These strategies are guided by the Children and Families Act and the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and information published by schools to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Guidance for schools on the Public Sector Equality Duty was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in November 2012.

Following the introduction of the Academies Act 2010, section 6(2) of the Act states that "The local authority must cease to maintain the school on the date ("the conversion date") on which the school or an educational institution that replaces it, opens as an Academy".

As such, the new Academy is fully responsible for the school and buildings and the Local Authority will no longer have any interest or responsibility towards the Academy except as a Landlord in accordance with the terms of the lease which they would have granted. As part of its corporate landlord duties the Local Authority will ensure that compliance against the terms of the lease is in place. All academies are funded by Central Government not by Local Authorities; therefore academies are not deemed as in scope for this strategy.

1.3 North East Lincolnshire’s Strategic Priorities

This Accessibility Strategy aligns with North East Lincolnshire Council’s Outcomes Framework and the vision of North East Lincolnshire as a place, working collaboratively to build stronger communities and a stronger economy for the benefit of all local residents. The Council’s five strategic priorities and associated success indicators are detailed in Figure 1 below:



The SEN Strategy outlines the strategic intents of the local authority to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Accessibility in North East Lincolnshire is likely to have direct impact on all of the key success indicators. Table 1 (overleaf) demonstrates the thread between NEL’s Outcomes Framework and the SEND Strategy priorities.

Table 1: The thread between NEL’s Outcomes Framework and the SEND Strategy priorities

	Learning and Growing	Investing in our Future	Vitality and Health	Economy and Strength	Safe and Secure
	All people in NEL fulfil their potential through skills and learning	All people in NEL live in sustainable communities	All people in NEL enjoy good health and well being	All people in NEL enjoy and benefit from a strong economy	All people in NEL feel safe and are safe
Priority outcomes for children and young people in NEL with SEND.	Learning provision for all children and young people with SEND is of high quality across all providers.	Children and young people with SEND live confidently in supportive communities where people are able and want to get involved.	Children and young people with SEND have the information and advice to support self-reliance and independence, their health is protected and they have access to safe, responsive and effective quality health and social care services.	Children and young people with SEND have the skills and confidence to in the future secure and sustain employment (if appropriate) and community living.	Children and young people with SEND access and receive the help and support they need at the earliest opportunity.
Key actions to improve priority outcomes for children and young people in NEL with SEND.	Support schools, academies and settings to raise educational attainment and wider outcomes for all children and young people with SEND including those identified at SEN Support.	Plan, facilitate and support the development of services and provision to meet identified needs particularly for the most complex and or vulnerable groups of children and young people. Where data and outcomes tell us that there are particular difficulties for children and young people with SEND at this time, specifically: 1. Autistic spectrum condition (ASC) 2. Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)	Strengthen and promote the focus on multi-agency support and co-ordination for complex needs, continual development and promotion of the Local Offer and high quality SEN statutory processes.	Provide a strategic approach to support the development of a wide range of services and provision for children and young people with SEND through joint commissioning.	Effective engagement of children and young people with SEND in planning their provision and having a wider voice in the development of services and provision designed to meet their needs at all stages of the SEND processes.

1.4 Resourcing the Strategy

- To deliver the outcomes identified in this strategy, existing funding streams will be directed toward the priorities identified for local authority maintained schools. The local authority will continue to look at ways to improve its efficiency and effectiveness to deliver the same quality and range of services for less money, or to deliver more for the same level of expenditure.
- Wherever possible, the local authority will seek to develop services and projects in conjunction with key partners in the delivery of services for children and young people such as health and children's social care.
- The local authority provides a range of individual and often complex services in order to meet their commitments.

1.5 Monitoring and Review Arrangements

- The Accessibility Strategy will be kept under review and amended as necessary to reflect newly published legislation and statutory guidance, developments in local resources and service delivery, and progress against the action plans.
- North East Lincolnshire's SEND Executive Board monitors the implementation of SEND arrangements across the Borough and their impact on children and young people with SEND.

2.0 The Legal Framework

2.1 The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brought together and simplified many pre-existing equality legislation. The planning duty for local authorities first came into force in September 2002. The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty or 'general duty' that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools, academies and free schools.

Early years providers, including private day nurseries, child-minders, child minder agencies, pre-schools, playgroups, and Sure Start Children's Centres, which provide early education to pre-school children, have the same duties under the Equality Act 2010 as other service providers. Although, not considered to be education institutions, they are required to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice if they are in receipt of the Free Entitlement Funding, and are inspected by Ofsted.

2.2 Enforcement of the Act

Claims of discrimination or harassment against a child/young person by a school will be made by the parent/carer of the pupil to the First-tier Tribunal (Special

Educational Needs and Disability) (previously known as SENDIST) of the Health, Education and Social Care (HESC) Chamber. Appeals against the panel's decisions now go to the Upper Tribunal instead of to the High Court. Claims have to be brought within 6 months of the act to which the claim relates, but the panel has the power to consider claims after that time has passed if it considers it just and equitable to do so.

There is a new procedure for complainants to ask questions in respect of a contravention of the Act before a formal case is taken to the tribunal. This means that if a child/young person believes that he/she has been discriminated against or harassed by their school then, before deciding whether to bring a case, they can ask questions of the school about their treatment. Special forms and guidance have been developed for this purpose, but are not compulsory. Questions asked by a child/young person (either on the prescribed forms or otherwise) and the answer by the school can be used as part of evidence in any subsequent court or tribunal case.

2.3 Accessibility Planning

With regard to the planning duty for disabled children and young people, three strands have been identified which schools and local authorities must address in their accessibility plans/strategies. These are:

- increasing the extent to which disabled children/young people can participate in the curriculum;
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled children/young people to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided;
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled children/young people.

This is known as 'The Planning Duty'.

Schools must also have regard to the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and must regularly review them. An accessibility plan may be a freestanding document or may be published as part of another document such as the school development plan.

Schools also have additional duties under the Equality Act to publish information e.g. to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Local authorities must prepare accessibility strategies based on the same principles as the access plans for schools. Local authorities, in relation to their education functions, are under the same duty as schools - to have accessibility strategies, to provide reasonable adjustments for school aged children and young people, with the aim of avoiding disadvantage, and to provide auxiliary aids and services.

Guidance on the planning duties and wider compliance with the Equality Act as applicable to both schools and local authorities can be found in “Equality Act 2010: advice for schools” which was published in February 2013. This can be downloaded at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

3.0 Increasing Participation in the School Curriculum

Schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all children/young people and have a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for disabled children/young people and those with special educational needs (SEN).

The curriculum covers not only teaching and learning but the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities or school visits.

The curriculum should provide relevant and challenging learning to all children and young people. It should follow the principles set out in the National Curriculum inclusion statement:

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to pupils’ needs and
- Overcoming potential barriers for individuals and groups of pupils

Schools should consider the needs of a range of disabled and prospective pupils, but they are not obliged to anticipate every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments for children/young people that might attend in the future - e.g. being prepared to produce large font papers for pupils with a visual impairment even though there are no such children/young people currently admitted to the school.

Additional provision to enable pupils with learning difficulties to access the curriculum is already delivered through the SEN framework and this will cover the needs of many disabled children/young people.

3.1 External Resources Available to Schools

The local authority recognises that schools are likely to require some external support to maximise their ability to respond to diverse needs. Through various specialist teams and services, the local authority promotes the inclusion and attainment of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These teams include the Special Advisory Service (SAS), the Education Team for Hearing and Vision, outsourced services for supporting children/young people with Autism and Physical Difficulties through Barnardo’s and support for children/young people with speech and language needs through the NHS Speech and Language Team (SALT)

This range of specialist provision is reviewed and developed to correspond with increasing or changing patterns of demand for services for children and young people with additional needs.

4.0 Improving the Physical Environment of Schools

This strand of the planning duty includes improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by the schools.

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, heating, ventilation, lifts, signs, interior surfaces, floor coverings, room décor and furniture. Improvements to physical access might include: ramps, handrails, lifts, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, adjustable lighting, blinds, induction loops, well designed room acoustics and way-finding systems.

All new school buildings have to comply with the Building Regulations and The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and should be physically accessible to disabled children and young people. However, much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings.

Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved by rearranging room space, removing obstructions from walkways, changing the layout of classrooms and designated storage space or by reallocating rooms to particular subject specialisms.

When planning to improve the physical environment, schools should consider the needs of individual pupils or groups of pupils including:

- Pupils with complex physical impairments who may use a wheelchair to move around school.
- Pupils with less complex physical impairments, who are ambulant, but still require some adaptations, special considerations or adjustments to the school environment.
- Pupils with a sensory impairment or other difficulty requiring adaptations to the school environment or the presentation of information in appropriate formats.
- Pupils who, for a variety of reasons, require specialist toilet and changing facilities.

In addition to having a duty to consider reasonable adjustments for particular individual disabled pupils, schools also have to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, as it is likely that any school will have a

disabled pupil at some point. However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments.

4.1 External Resources Available to Schools

The local authority is committed to developing the range of provision available across the area with the aim that children are able to access an adapted school within their local area, and recognises that schools are likely to require external support when looking to make improvements of this nature.

Support is given by the local authority for the development of specialist SEN resources in mainstream schools to educate children/young people, wherever possible, within North East Lincolnshire and promote inclusion. This work includes improvements and adaptations to buildings (including furniture and fittings) and the provision of specialist equipment.

Through various specialist teams and services, the local authority provides advice to schools about, for example, improving the acoustic environment for pupils with hearing impairment, the reduction of glare and the improvement of signage for pupils with visual impairment, and reasonable adjustments to the physical environment for pupils with mobility difficulties.

Physiotherapists can advise a school about an individual pupil's mobility and physical development. This might include actions like co-ordination and ability to sit, stand and walk. They can advise the school on how best to help the child develop physically, to keep the child as mobile as possible and on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the environment.

Occupational Therapists can advise a school about using activity-based therapies to help raise an individual pupil's self-esteem and to encourage them to be as independent as possible. They will also advise on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the school environment if required.

The local authority has a Specialist Equipment Policy in place.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission have produced technical guidance for schools on "Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils"

[http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/Reasonable%20adjustments%20for%20disabled%20pupils%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/Reasonable%20adjustments%20for%20disabled%20pupils%20(1).pdf)

5.0 Improving the Delivery of Information

This part of the duty covers planning to make written information normally provided by a school to its pupils available to disabled pupils. The information should take account of pupils' disabilities, pupils' and parents/carers' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame.

The information might include hand-outs, timetables, and information about school events.

Schools might consider providing the information in alternative formats (such as large print and audio tape) using ICT, or providing the information orally.

The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 specifies the minimum requirements for information which must be provided on school websites and reproduced as a paper copy without charge for any parent who asks for it.

School websites must be reviewed annually and include:

- The name, postal address and telephone number of the school, and the name of a person to whom enquiries should be addressed;
- The admission arrangements for the school, including any selection or oversubscription criteria, or guidance on how to access such information on the local authority's website;
- Information as to where and by what means parents/carers may access the school's most recently published report by her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills.
- The school's most recent key stage 2 / key stage 4 results as published by the Secretary of State in the School Performance Tables published on the Department for Education's website
- Information as to where and by what means parents may access the School Performance Tables published by the Secretary of State on the Department for Education's (DfE's) website.
- Information about the school curriculum including the content of the curriculum followed by the school for each subject and details as to how additional information relating to the curriculum may be obtained; the names of any phonics or reading schemes in operation; a list of the courses offered at key stage 4 which lead to a GCSE qualification; and a list of other courses offered at key stage 4 and the qualifications that may be acquired.
- The School's Behaviour Policy
- The amount of the school's allocation from the Pupil Premium grant in respect of the current academic year; details of how it is intended that the allocation will be spent; details of how the previous academic year's allocation was spent, and the effect of this expenditure on the educational attainment of those pupils at the school in respect of whom grant funding was allocated.
- The school's policy for pupils with special educational needs

- The School's Local Offer

5.1 The Local Authority resource

The local authority supports schools to improve the delivery of information to children and young people with SEN and disabilities and their families through the various specialist teams and services listed earlier in a range of ways including:

- Advice on appropriate communication strategies, for example the use of British Sign Language and Visual Aids;
- Advice on other strategies and resources;
- Training on the presentation of written materials and differentiated information
- Support groups for families

5.2 The 'Local Offer'

The SEND reforms require every local authority to produce a web based 'Local Offer'. The Local Offer brings together information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

North East Lincolnshire's Local Offer has been developed in consultation with, and as a result of the feedback from service providers, young people, families and the parent/carer consortium. The Local Offer for North East Lincolnshire can be found at:

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-and-local-offer/>

Links to each of North East Lincolnshire's schools, with their local offers, can be found on the Schools Directory:

5.3 Other useful sources of information include:

SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Information Advice & Support Service)

The service is freely available to all parents/carers of children and young people living in North East Lincolnshire who have a special educational need.

Young people can also access the service independently from their parents/carers. The service is impartial, confidential and free.

In North East Lincolnshire this service is outsourced which means it is independent of the local authority. It is provided in partnership with Barnardo's.

SENDIASS can provide support around:

- Local policy and practice
- The local offer
- Personalisation and personal budgets
- Education law on SEN and related law on disability, health and social care

Children's Disability Service (CDS)

The Children's Disability Service (CDS), like Family Information Services, provide information about universal services and more specialist groups that can offer support. The CDC complete single assessments for children and young people with disabilities and complex health needs who may require additional services and support to meet their outcomes.

Anyone wishing to know more about what support is available for a child or young person with additional needs, can contact the Children's Disability Service (CDS) on (01472) 325607.

For any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child, contact the Multi Agency Family First Access Point (FFAP) on (01472) 326292 option 2.

Families First Information Service (FFIS)

The Families First Information Service is a free, impartial information service for families with children aged 0-19 years. FFIS has a statutory duty to provide parents/carers with information about services and activities for children and young people. The service is available on the FIS Information line on 0800 18 303 17. fis@nelincs.gov.uk

North East Lincolnshire Council and its partners are using a prevention and early intervention approach to provide better integrated services across family support. This includes children's centres/Family Hubs, health visiting, school nursing, integrated family services and some of our youth provision.

Young People's Support Services (YPSS) (formerly Connexions)

The Young People's Support Service (YPSS) is part of North East Lincolnshire Council. It is a signposting service for 13-19 years olds up to 25 years of age for young people with special educational needs.

They offer free, impartial information, advice and guidance to children and young people with education health and care plans (EHCPs) and their families on the learning and vocational choices that are available to young people from year 11 onwards. They can also offer support with any personal or welfare advice require.

This service commences in year 9, when preparation for adulthood is addressed, and includes one-to-one guidance, working closely with school SEN Co-ordinators (SENCOs), and attending annual and person-centred reviews. Its aim is to support children and young people and their parents/carers in exploring and making well-informed decisions about learning, training and work beyond 16.

YPSS Youth Support Workers (formally NEET Personal Advisor's)

This service works with young people aged 16-19 years old who are not in education, employment or training.

Services include referral to training providers and addressing barriers to accessing training/employment.

5.4 Accessibility of the strategy document itself:

- It is published on North East Lincolnshire's website linked to the Local Offer
- It has been updated and settings, schools and academies have been informed
- It is available in hard copy on request
- For clarity, attention has been made to the style and size of the font used and further amendments can be made on request
- The layout is straightforward with a contents page to direct attention to each section
- The level of specialist terminology means that the readability of the document is higher than is desirable. Support is available for children and young people and their families to read this together. Please contact Clare Linfitt (SEN Services Manager on 01472 323236)

Further references

North East Lincolnshire's Local Offer

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/children-and-families/send-and-local-offer/>

Children and Families Act 2014

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>