Children and Young People’s Services
Accessibility Strategy 2014 – 2017

together we make a difference
1. Introduction
The overall aim of this strategy is to ensure that Liverpool City Council supports schools it is responsible for, in meeting the needs of disabled pupils and raising their attainments. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that accessibility of the curriculum, the physical environment and information for disabled pupils is central to the delivery of services and supports schools with their accessibility plans.

2. Vision
Liverpool fully endorses the ‘social model’ of disability, which proposes that it is society which dictates who is excluded- not the nature of the disability itself. The model recognises that removing barriers is as much about encouraging positive attitudes and behaviour traits as it is about removing physical barriers.

In developing this strategy we acknowledge that the world is changing rapidly and that social interaction, teaching and learning and access to information, goods and resources is increasingly delivered electronically. Our hope is that the technological revolution together with rates of progress in new developments can support us in removing barriers experienced by children and young people with impairments and disabilities.
3. Local Context
Liverpool has a wide range of provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The local authority works in partnership with schools to ensure that provision is relevant and responsive to needs. Special schools have strong links with mainstream schools to promote inclusion and in some instances; mainstream and special schools are co-located on one site. Specialist services and outreach providers from special schools are flexible in their approach to meeting need and work with schools and each other to ensure that all pupils enjoy full participation.

4. Definition
A person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments (Equality Act 2010)

5. Legislation
The Equality Act 2010 brought together and simplified existing equality legislation. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 introduced new duties on local authorities and schools. The harmonisation of previous equality legislation means that much of what is required of schools is already being carried out by them.

The planning duty for local authorities and schools came into force in September 2002. Local authorities were required to produce an Accessibility Strategy and schools were required to produce accessibility plans for publication in April 2003. 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. With regard to the planning duty for disabled pupils, three strands are identified as requirements for an accessibility strategy and accessibility plans.

It is a strategy/plan for, over a prescribed period of time -

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum,
- Improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school, and
- Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

6. Strategic Priorities:

a) Liverpool's Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2017

This is the single strategic and overarching five year plan for all services which affect children and young people across the city. It sets out how the City Council, together with its strategic partners (The Children’s Trust Board), will achieve improvements to the health, well being and safeguarding of children and young people across the city. It focuses on five priorities, one of which is children and young people with special educational needs, including those who are disabled.

The plan identifies what success will look like if children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities have access to opportunities and choices that can help them achieve their potential.


This sets out the local authority’s vision for the delivery of services to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The strategy specifies a range of different types of approaches to meeting the special educational needs of pupils and sets out policy and direction in relation to each. Please refer to this document if you require more in depth information about resourced provisions, special schools, outreach providers, specialist services and the processes we use to commission support.

7. National Strategy

To support the implementation of the wide reaching reforms in the Children and Families Act 2014, associated Regulations and the requirements of the revised Code of Practice July 2014, Liverpool has established a 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Steering Group chaired by the Director of Children Services. Membership of this group represents those organisations that must pay regard to The Code of Practice and includes parent carer representatives. The primary purpose of the group is to ensure that the transition to a new system in September 2014 is seamless and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are improved. The group also considers economies of scale for the delivery of jointly commissioned services and resourcing of specialist provision in mainstream and special schools; the development of a Local Offer that will ensure better access to information, advice and support for parent carers, children and young people as well as practitioners working in the field; and the introduction of a personalisation agenda that puts children, young people and their families at the heart of the decision making process.

The strategy group reports to and works in partnership with head teacher associations, representing primary and secondary mainstream schools and special schools. The group provides progress reports to Liverpool Learning Partnership, a collaborative between schools and other learning establishments in the city.


8. Access to curriculum

Considerable progress has been made by schools since 2003 to improve accessibility to the curriculum. This covers not only teaching and learning, but also the wider curriculum of after school or extended school activities, including trips and visits. The initial demands of the inclusion agenda and the national strategies initiative, introduced by the previous government, led to schools adopting a quality first teaching approach and a graduated response to meeting need. In partnership with local authority specialist services, schools have adapted teaching methods to respond to the strengths and needs of pupils through differentiation of the curriculum. The extended services through schools programme was introduced to lengthen the school day, and encouraged schools to improve accessibility to extracurricular activities for all pupils. The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme supported the development of enhanced provision and activities for disabled children outside of the classroom. Although both these programmes no longer receive Government funding, their legacy remains in the way schools are organised and the more transparent ethos which prevails; involving young people and their families in decision making both inside the school day and beyond.

All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils and in particular for disabled pupils. The local authority supports schools to respond to individual needs of pupils and training needs of staff with a range of specialist services, commissioned services and traded services.

a) School Improvement Liverpool

Provides support to maintained schools as a part of the Universal Offer. The service is available to all phases and settings, whether mainstream, academies or special schools and includes:

- The SEN Briefings in the autumn and spring terms and the SEN Transition event in the summer.
- Support in preparation for Ofsted inspection.
- Advice and support in the development of guidance relating to policies such as SEND policies.

In addition schools can purchase back bespoke training and support including:

- Inclusion Charter Mark award visits
- Whole school support and training

b) Educational Psychology Service

This is a universal service that aims to promote improved attainment, inclusion and well-being of all children and young people in Liverpool. In addition to its universal function the service also has targeted and specialist functions. One of these functions is to support children with disabilities and those whose development appears to be delayed in some areas.

c) CAAT (Communication, Assistive and Augmentative Team)

A team based at Springwood Heath Primary School that offers information, advice and support on the use of different technologies in the classroom for pupils with communication and physical difficulties.

d) Sensory Support Service

A team of specialist teachers and support staff that provide 1:1 pupil led support to children and young people from birth to 19 years who are visually or hearing impaired. The aim of the service is to ensure that children and young people, in mainstream or special schools in receipt of support, enjoy the same opportunities as their peers and all barriers to maximising potential are overcome.
e) **Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service (SENISS)**
This service enables individual pupils with a range of needs to access the curriculum with specialist advisory teacher support and inclusion support workers. The team also delivers training to schools and HEIs to ensure improved participation for all pupils is achieved from a whole school approach. The acquisition of The Dyslexia Friendly Schools award is supported and celebrated by the team.

f) **Social Inclusion Team**
This team provides a range of specialist services aimed at supporting schools with pupils at risk of disengagement/exclusion and those who are permanently excluded.

g) **Speech and Language Service**
This is a specialist service that supports children with the most severe and specific speech and language needs in resourced bases located in mainstream schools. The co-ordinator of the provisions acts as a consultant to individual schools and provides a menu of training opportunities to support whole school INSET. (In Service Training)

h) **Outreach Support**
The local authority commissions outreach support for pupils in mainstream schools, with a range of special educational needs and disabilities, to ensure greater access to the curriculum. Support is commissioned from the following schools:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Main area of expertise</th>
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<tr>
<td>Millstead Primary School</td>
<td>Severe Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Princes Primary School</td>
<td>Severe Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redbridge High School</td>
<td>Severe Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palmerston School</td>
<td>Severe Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barlows Primary School</td>
<td>Early Years Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Springwood Heath Primary School</td>
<td>Physical Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbot’s Lea School</td>
<td>Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank View High School</td>
<td>Complex Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aigburth High School</td>
<td>Complex Learning Difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clifford Holroyde Specialist College</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hope School</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ernest Cookson School</td>
<td>Behaviour</td>
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9. Access to the environment

Schools in Liverpool are increasingly aware that reasonable adjustments may be required to meet the needs of disabled pupils.

Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to schools as well. All new school buildings have to comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to disabled pupils. However, much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings. Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools do need 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.

Liverpool City Council is committed to developing the range of provision available across the city and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

10. Capital Programme

The City Council is undertaking a £170m programme of capital investment which will see 12 schools rebuilt by September 2015 and the significant refurbishment and remodelling of a further eight. As well as compliance with the legislative and regulatory framework governing the accessibility of school buildings, such as Part M of the Building Regulations (Access to and Use of Building), designs have been developed in consultation with the City’s Corporate Access Officer to ensure the new facilities are fully inclusive learning environments.

In support of the overall inclusion agenda the major investment programme includes the rebuilding of a number of special schools:

- Bankview
- Redbridge
- Aigburth High
- Palmerston
- Millstead

It also includes elements of new build and the part refurbishment of Abbots Lea. In total over £24m of City Council and EFA funding is being targeted at the City’s special schools.

Major improvements to the accessibility of schools buildings have been completed over the last 10 years using specialist funding streams such as the Schools Access Initiative grant, which came to an end in 2010. More modest works continue to be undertaken through the annual programmes of Planned Maintenance and Minor Works as priorities arise.

5liverpool.gov.uk/mayor/pledges/
11. Environmental strategies

Outreach services from schools and local authority specialist services can support and advise schools on a range of environmental strategies that enhance the inclusion of disabled pupils. For example

- Springwood Heath Primary School Outreach Service can facilitate the access of a pupil with a physical difficulty or a pupil with fine and gross motor difficulties to a school or setting. This can include advice on rearranging room space, removing obstructions from walkways, changing the layout of classrooms etc.

- The team also carry out risk assessments for pupils with physical difficulties moving between schools, attending residential placements etc.

- The ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) Outreach Team at Abbot’s Lea School can support schools to create safe spaces for pupils with ASD type difficulties. They can also advise on developing workstations that limit distractions for pupils. The team support transition from school to school and will carry out a risk assessment to support pupils accessing additional activities. Pupils can be supported to manage new environments with the acquisition of stress management and relaxation techniques.

- Behavioural, Emotional, Social Difficulties (BESD) Outreach providers at Hope School, Ernest Cookson School and Clifford Holroyde Specialist College can work with schools to identify a quiet space or time out area to enable pupils to manage their emotions. Providers support transition from school to school and support pupils to respond to new situations using anger management strategies and relaxation techniques.

- Special Educational Needs Inclusion Services (SENISS) and/or the ASD Outreach at Abbot’s Lea School can support schools to present information visually to ensure greater participation for pupils with disabilities.

- SENISS can advise and train schools on how to create a Dyslexia Friendly School.

- The outreach team at Springwood Heath School, CAAT, SENISS and the Sensory Service can provide a range of advice to schools on how to support pupils with sensory processing difficulties, specific learning difficulties, sensory impairments and communication difficulties using different technologies.

- The Sensory Service can support schools to improve the acoustic environment for pupils with a hearing impairment and the improvement of signage for pupils with a visual impairment. The service also has a trained mobility officer to liaise with schools on admission of a pupil with a visual impairment.

A range of health professionals can also support schools to include disabled pupils:

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

- Physiotherapists can advise a school about an individual's mobility and physical development. This might include things like co-ordination and ability to sit, stand and walk. They can advise a school on how best to help the child physically to keep the child as mobile as possible and on any appropriate specialist equipment or adaptations to the environment.
12. Access to 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 developing and widening use of ICT is significantly transforming the lives of everybody but especially those children and young people who are unable to communicate using traditional methods.

Schools have made good progress in providing information in alternative formats and the advent of websites; internet and e mail services have enhanced communication with all parent carers, young people and children.

The introduction of the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Quality Mark in Liverpool has proven to be a huge success. This status has subsequently been acquired by the City Council and all schools and services are able to respond to the needs of a population in the city who struggle to access information because of a specific learning difficulty. The use of different communication strategies, especially in schools, has resulted in better outcomes for pupils. The Special Educational Needs Inclusion Support Service (SENISS) supports schools in developing dyslexia friendly materials including specialised computer programmes as well as the acquisition of the quality mark.

The Sensory Service can provide specially trained communicators and braillists to ensure pupils with sensory impairments access information. The team can advise on appropriate communication strategies, equipment to enhance communication and the presentation of differentiated information including large print, braille, symbols, audiotapes etc.

Commissioned outreach services from special schools, that support children with a wide range of needs during transition from KS2 to KS3, are able to work with schools to present information in different formats to ensure pupils adapt to the culture and requirements of secondary education. EG timetables, travel information, essential kit etc.

Liverpool is a city with diverse populations and the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) can offer advice and signpost schools to an interpreter and/or translation services to support children, young people and parents whose second language is English.

The Parent Partnership Service provide information for parent carers in different formats including a telephone help line, newsletters, leaflets and training/conference events.

The duty placed on local authorities in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer is a strategy to simplify and make more accessible information about processes, systems and services that support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. In Liverpool we are coproducing our local offer with parent carers and young people to ensure that information is available in chosen formats.

As we move into the implementation phase of the reform agenda, which places children and families at the heart of process and planning, we will continue to support our schools to work together and with parent carers to ensure our specialist and outreach services are designed to maximise inclusion.

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13. Conclusion

Local authority services, in partnership with schools will implement this strategy to ensure that disabled children enjoy a fully inclusive experience. Their presence and participation is valued both in schools and in their wider communities. The strategy will be reviewed quarterly by the 0-25 SEND Steering Group with further scrutiny provided by The Children’s Trust Board.
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