

Peterborough City Council Education Services

Accessibility Strategy April 2018 – August 2020



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Improving access to education and educational achievement by disabled pupils is essential to ensuring equality of opportunity and securing their full participation in society. This Accessibility Strategy explains how Peterborough City Council will adopt a strategic approach to planning for increased access to its schools, to the curriculum and to information. It will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis.

2. Legislative Framework

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within a single piece of legislation. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.
- 2.2 The duty has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
 - foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 2.3 This strategy covers the three areas required in schedule 10 of the Act: *Accessibility for disabled pupils.*

- (a) increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum;
- (b) improving the physical environment of the schools 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;
- (c) improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

2.4 The delivery of information in (c) must be:

- (a) within a reasonable time;
- (b) in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents/carers/guardians.

3. Definition of disability

3.1 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).

4. Vision

4.1 Peterborough City Council's vision is for all children and young people to have access to genuinely inclusive learning across all of its educational settings, providing opportunities for raising and realising aspirations, achieving potential and participating fully in education and wider society. Through the realisation of this vision we aim to ensure that all children and young people have a full range of support and opportunities available to them, and that they have a voice which is heard at every opportunity.

5. Local Context

- 5.1 Peterborough is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK with a predominantly young population. There are 48,400 children and young people under the age of 19 years and this is estimated to rise to 54,521 by 2021. It is expected that the numbers of children and young people under the age of 19 years will have increased by 23% by the year 2023. It can be anticipated therefore that the numbers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will also increase in line with the population.
- 5.2 15.5% of pupils in the City are identified as having special educational needs and/or a disability compared to the national average of 14.9%. The percentage with an education, health and care plan or statement is 3.3% compared with a national average figure of 2.9%. Of those children and young people who are looked after, 40.2% have a plan or statement compared to 30.3% nationally. The number of children and young people in receipt of SEN support in an educational setting is broadly similar to the national average at 12.2% compared with 12.1% nationally. (DfE August 2016 and Peterborough City Council Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inclusion Policy 2016-2019).
- 5.3 Peterborough has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. The council's partnership with schools is well-established with specialist teams providing advice and support at school, group and individual levels. In addition to our special schools' provision, a number of schools have specialist Hubs. The primary purpose of these Hubs is to help to bring about improvement to the quality of support and access for all pupils across all Peterborough mainstream schools. The Hubs are developing as centres of expertise who can model, train and support other schools to raise the quality and effectiveness of support and practice.

- 5.4 The Peterborough SENCo Network provides an on-going training and development partnership enhancing provision and support for children and young people with SEND. The network helps facilitate a termly network meeting/training opportunity and newsletter.

6. Increasing access to the curriculum

- 6.1 The joint commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 should lead to the development of more integrated packages of support which will support children and young people with disabilities in accessing the curriculum
- 6.2 All schools are responsible for providing a broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum for all pupils and in particular for disabled pupils. Parents and carers are key partners in developing support for children and young people with disabilities. Schools must work with both parents/carers and children/young people to develop appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.
- 6.3 Peterborough City Council has an on-going training and development programme to embed the principles of personalisation and person-centred planning into all providers' work with children and young people with SEND.
- 6.4 The Peterborough Local Offer provides a wide ranging selection of training and development opportunities for practitioners across the city to develop their inclusive and supportive practices, whether this be in education, social care or health services or in a voluntary or caring role. This training is delivered by specialist services within the council, by parent representatives through the local parent carer forum (Family Voice Peterborough), in partnership with the specialist Hubs, the Peterborough SENCO Network and/or through partnerships with other services, experts and/or providers.

- 6.5 Peterborough's SEND/Inclusion Service and Family Voice Peterborough, the local parent carer forum, work collaboratively in supporting the council and schools to engage with parents and carers of pupils with disabilities to inform and develop good practice within settings.

7. Improving the physical environment

- 7.1 Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to schools as well. All new school buildings will comply with current building regulations and be physically accessible to pupils with disabilities. Much of the work in this area will involve improving access to existing buildings.
- 7.2 Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools must consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, as it is likely that any school will have pupils, staff and visitors with disabilities at some point. Schools should ensure that in an emergency, there is provision to evacuate all building users, including people with disabilities, to a place of safety.
- 7.3 However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments.
- 7.4 Peterborough 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.

8. Improving access to information

- 8.1 The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. The Peterborough Local Offer is available at www.peterborough.gov.uk/localoffer. For those families who are not able to access the internet, there are plans in place to enable access to the Local Offer through local libraries by April 2018. Posters and leaflets have been produced to publicise the Local Offer.
- 8.2 The SEND Partnership Service provides a dedicated information, advice and support service to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families. Young people can access the service independently from their parents. The service is impartial, free and confidential.
- 8.3 Schools have a duty to provide information in accessible forms to students who may have difficulty reading information in standard written form. The communication duty covers the delivery of school information normally provided to pupils in writing. Schools should be aware that the written form does not simply mean printed text and might also include curriculum materials including handouts and worksheets that might include illustrations, diagrams and maps, materials presented on whiteboards, flipcharts and ICT systems. Support and advice on making accessible information available to pupils is available from the specialist Inclusion Services within the council.