Directorate of People Services

Accessibility Strategy

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This strategy has been co-produced with the following people:

- Parents
- Young people with a disability
- Schools
- Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing equality legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act and others. The function of the Equality Act has been to simplify the law and bring together the duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The effect of the Act is to extend protection to groups of people who were previously covered by separate laws and to incorporate the provisions included within previous equality legislation.

The Equality Act has 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 Accessibility Strategy complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/schedule/10. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

1. eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;

2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

3. foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in schedule 10 of the Act: Accessibility for disabled pupils. This schedule provides for accessibility arrangements for pupils in schools as set out in section 88.

(2) An accessibility strategy is a strategy to enable the following, over a prescribed period –

(a) increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools’ curriculums;

(b) improve the physical environment of 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 schools;

(c) improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

(3) The delivery in sub-paragraph (2)(c) must be –

(a) within a reasonable time;

(b) in ways which are determined after taking into account pupils’ disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

In keeping with the legislation, this Accessibility Strategy sets out the ways in which the Council will increase access to education for disabled pupils, in the schools and settings for which it is responsible. We will work with schools to ensure that both the curriculum and schools’ IT meet accessibility requirements set out within both education and equalities legislation. This strategy also links with the local authorities’ vision, as detailed in Redcar and Cleveland’s Vulnerable Learners Strategy, which provides a framework for the commissioning and delivery of education services and support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people, with clear outcomes over the next six years to provide the best possible start in life for all learners.
2. The purpose and direction of Redcar and Cleveland’s Accessibility Strategy: Vision and Values

Our vision is to enable all children and young people to aspire to and achieve their full potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of the community.

Learning is at the heart of delivering that vision and improving the attainment of all children is a key priority. Redcar and Cleveland local authority acknowledges that the attainment of pupils needs to be improved, including those pupils with impairments. Therefore raising attainment is a key priority. School settings offer great opportunities and responsibilities for making sure all children stay safe and healthy, enjoy and achieve and make a positive contribution to their communities in order that they are able to get the most out of life now and in the future. The guiding principle underpinning this strategy is to make learning accessible to all our children in ways that will promote the best outcomes.

We want the very best for our children, starting with early years through to their transition into adulthood. Together with our partner agencies we are working towards achieving this common aim.

There are many challenges for schools and the local authority to overcome, to ensure that we can deliver the very best education for all children. We need to respond to changes ahead and to make efficient and cost-effective use of investment opportunities in the context of challenging economic circumstances and in a changing and increasingly more diverse school system of maintained schools, non-maintained academies and free schools.

Our aim is to ensure that children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are at the heart of our vision. Our strategy aims to provide the very best education for all our children, delivered as locally as possible to the child’s home and community.

It is important to note that a pupil with a disability does not necessarily have special educational needs. A pupil with a disability has special educational needs if they require any special educational provision to be made for them to access education. Children and young people may have either a disability and/or special educational needs.

3. Schools in Redcar & Cleveland

Redcar and Cleveland local authority aim to integrate students with disabilities in mainstream settings where this is appropriate for their learning. However, some young people have significant and complex needs that require specialist facilities and resources. Any structural amendments to school buildings or any new school buildings must comply with the British Standard document which refers to DDA compliance; see attached.

Redcar and Cleveland’s Local Offer contains information about schools, colleges and training providers across the borough and also further afield. Where educational establishments have provided us with further information about the support available to pupils with SEND, they have an orange ‘LO’ (Local Offer) icon in the right hand corner.

Our schools believe that in order to improve the life chances of, and achieve the vision for vulnerable learners across the borough; the following outcomes should be considered.
• Vulnerable learners are recognised early by agencies and help and support provided as soon as possible;
• Agencies demonstrate their commitment to being responsible for all vulnerable learners by securing shared, high quality outcomes for them beyond the immediate confines of their own organisations;
• Mechanisms are secured to ensure decision making is open, transparent, consistent and in the long term interest of vulnerable learners;
• Education settings further embrace partnerships and school-to-school working, through sharing expert staff and innovative approaches, to challenge under performance and secure services they need to drive continuous improvement;
• Employability skills and meaningful progression post 16 will be developed between education providers, local business and industry;
• The quality of learning experiences across the age range will be engaging and attractive to young people;
• Children, young people and their families will be encouraged and supported to share the accountability and responsibility for improving life chances for vulnerable learners.

Redcar and Cleveland’s Vulnerable Learners Strategy sets out how we are working together to achieve these outcomes.

4. The main priorities in the strategy

At a strategic level, accessibility is a core principle of the local authority which permeates its work. In respect of the local authority’s duty to provide an accessibility strategy, the People Services directorate leads on the specific aspects set out below. It also works alongside the local authorities key priority to raise attainment of pupils across the borough.

• Increasing access to the curriculum for pupils with a Special Education Need and/ or a Disability

Our strategy places equality principles at the heart of service delivery. Services have been redesigned and reconfigured to achieve this; as a result a focus on increasing access to the curriculum has been prioritised. Key strands of our strategy are:

• Service Delivery
• Training, advice and guidance
• Developing a range of specialist provision which shares and supports the development of good practice e.g. through delivery of outreach support.

• Service Delivery

All Services to Schools; including Education Psychologists, Attendance and Welfare, Specialist teaching and Pupil Inclusion, ensure that local authority support for inclusion and equality (including for pupils with SEN and disabilities) is central to the work of the service. Full details of what each of these services can offer are listed on Redcar and Cleveland’s Local Offer. These services assist schools and settings with the equality & diversity agenda by helping to identify and support pupils e.g. those who may require statutory assessment. Redcar and Cleveland’s SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) also offers independent support to parents of children with SEND (including at early stages of identification and assessment).

We have a strong commitment to equality and achievement, which is a key performance priority in all service planning. This is underpinned by our developing strategy for ICT
which recognizes the importance of new technologies in delivering, enhancing and opening up the curriculum for all learners, including those with disabilities

Considerable work has been undertaken with schools to support them in improving practice to:

- Remove barriers to learning
- Improve access through technologies and by making reasonable adjustments
- Adopt inclusive teaching strategies and improve classroom organisation and practice
- Promote dyslexia friendly and communication friendly approaches to learning

Individual Local Offers from each of the schools in the borough are published on the school’s website and can also be accessed via Redcar and Cleveland’s Local Offer. Each of the schools’ individual Local Offers’ detail the information in respect of accessible for children with special education needs and disabilities.

Our strategy is to prioritise the development of our schools and the workforce to promote the most effective inclusive learning and accessible curriculum.

- **Training, advice and guidance:**

  Quality training, advice and guidance is being achieved through building a network of support and expertise, to assist schools in supporting access for pupils wherever they live within Redcar and Cleveland. Developing capacity in mainstream schools remains a key priority for the Local Authority and is delivered through:

  - All Special Education Needs Coordinator’s (SENCOs) attend regular network meetings to share and build on good practice across the Borough.

  - An effective network of skilled teachers, with specific expertise is maintained; these include; leading practitioners, advanced skills teachers as well as local and national leaders in education that can demonstrate best practice and support other local schools.

  Redcar and Cleveland local authority also offers Early Years providers (childminders, day nurseries and schools) access to training and networking events as part of their continuous professional development. This includes training in specific areas such as speech and language, deaf awareness and Autism awareness.

- **Specialist Provision in Redcar and Cleveland**

  We aim to support the majority of children in their local mainstream schools; however, we recognise that some children require more specialist provision and therefore a key aspect of our strategy is to develop and consistently review a range of local specialist provision.

  The range of specialist services in Redcar and Cleveland help us to meet the learning and behaviour needs of children within the Borough. These include the Speech and Language service; High Needs support bases, Hearing and Visually Impaired Team and the Sensory Support team. Where appropriate additional specialist services can be commissioned and Redcar and Cleveland’s Local Offer provides further details on what these services can entail.

  The Inclusion Support Team works with and supports children from 3-5 years old who have significant special educational needs and/or disabilities within their early education place. The Inclusion Support Team works closely with parents; professionals within Health, Social
Care and Education; and practitioners within schools and the private and voluntary childcare sector such as day nurseries and childminders. They support our most complex children who attend the Cleveland Unit into another setting such as a day nursery, for one session of their free nursery education entitlement per week. They also offer advice and support to settings regarding curriculum activities, equipment and physical access to play to support the child’s inclusion. When the child reaches school age, the Inclusion team will support the child’s transition by visiting the school with the child and offering advice to the teaching staff as well as accompanying the child for a period of time as necessary.

Another aspect of the local authority’s strategy has been to develop Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) which provides outreach support for those children who have complex and challenging social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and disabilities, many of which are associated with medical conditions including e.g. ADHD, Tourette’s syndrome and autistic spectrum conditions. EOTAS offers support across the statutory school age range and the skilled and experienced staff work with local schools to support re-integration and to improve access to the curriculum.

Schools are able to access help and support from the local authority to assist them to improve curriculum access for their students in a number of ways. In addition to the specialist services described above, guidance, training and advice is available from the Local Authorities’ specialist teaching service, this includes specific support for key curriculum areas including English, mathematics and Science, PHSE and PE.

The local authority’s In-Year Fair Access Protocol can offer priority placement to a mainstream school in certain circumstances for vulnerable pupils or those with a protected characteristic but without an Education, Health and Care, Plan.

The local authority’s Home to School Travel Policy sets out the ways in which children and young people with disabilities can receive support with transport and help to develop independence with travel as an aspiration. Redcar and Cleveland’s policy has maintained travel assistance for post-16 learners with SEND, where specific criteria are met.

- **Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council website** [www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)

RCBC is committed to providing a website that is accessible to the widest possible audience, regardless of technology or ability. As such we are actively working to increase the accessibility and usability of our website and in doing so adhere to many of the national and international standards and guidelines available. The **Accessibility Statement** in respect of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council’s website details that the website endeavours to conform to level Double-A of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 which is the standard required by the national Government.

- **Management, co-ordination and implementation**

Responsibility and accountability for this Accessibility Strategy extends to the highest levels within RCBC and the People Services Directorate. The strategy is one of a number of approaches adopted by the council to help meet its stated ambition and to improve the attainment for all children and young people, including those with disabilities and barriers to their learning.