

HARRIS ACADEMY MERTON

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2011-2012

Background

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 applied to employment and 'goods and services' but not education. As a result of the SEN and Disability Act 2001, the DDA was amended to include Education. **The DDA now specifies that schools must not treat children less favourably, for a reason associated with their disability, and must take reasonable steps to avoid putting them at a disadvantage.**

Schools must also plan, over time, to increase access to all areas of school life for students with disabilities.

Schools are required to produce an **Accessibility Plan** for: -

- Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum – this is whole school level, not just teaching and learning but after Academy clubs, leisure and sporting activities and Academy visits
- Improving the physical environment to increase the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education and associated services and
- Improving the delivery of information to disabled students which is provided to students who are not disabled - taking into account views of students and parents

Information about the Accessibility Plan must be published in the annual report to parents. There is an overlap with the Academy's Special Educational Needs policy. Special educational provision is something additional to or otherwise different from normal provision. The Accessibility Plan goes beyond SEN. Its aim is to increase Inclusion.

There are two parts to the disability provisions in the new legislation. The 'discrimination' part requires schools to take **reasonable** steps to prevent a child with a disability being at a disadvantage. These are day-to-day adjustments that must be taken now and schools must ensure that no member of staff discriminates against a student with a disability. The nature of reasonable adjustments is likely to be found in good practice. The second part, the planning, looks to **improve**.

The aim of the Academy is to provide full access for all its students as part of the Academy building and re-furbishment programme.

DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY

The definition of disability under the Act is: -

“A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, long-term, adverse affect on day-to-day activities”.

‘Substantial’ is defined as ‘more than trivial’ so the definition covers a large group of children and includes hidden disabilities such as dyslexia and other language and learning difficulties and some behavioural difficulties if, for example, they arise from recognised mental health difficulties, such as ADHD. Some, but not all, of the children will have special educational needs.

The aims of the Act and its Code of Practice are to encourage Inclusion. This requires us to think of the barriers each area of disability may cause the individual and to take steps to remove these, or reduce their impact.

The Act sets out areas of every day activities that people with disabilities may have difficulties with. Our Plan will improve access for all the following areas.

These are

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical co-ordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- Speech, hearing, eyesight
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Perception of risk of physical danger

10% of children nationally have some degree of dyslexia

10% of children nationally have some degree of speech and language difficulty

Questions that Senior Managers, Subject Leaders and others should ask

1. Ask questions and consider how your answers might be addressed in the Plan

Increasing access to the curriculum?

- Do all teachers and TA’s understand the nature of particular disabilities? Are they able to adapt their teaching to match particular needs, language ability and learning styles? What sort of training is appropriate?
- Are classroom texts/handouts suitable for particular disabilities? Is there a range of reading ages? Is text confusing/too small for some disabilities?
- Are students given copies of notes/details of homework if they find it difficult to copy off the board?
- Are students given visual material to support language and literacy?

- Would ICT increase access to the curriculum? How should we prioritise its purchase? How should we organise its use?

Improve the physical environment?

- What plans have we already got to decorate or refurbish any part of the Academy building? What should we consider when doing so? What particular features would benefit students with different disabilities, eg contrasting colours between walls and doors for a visual impairment, flashing lights on fire alarm bells for a hearing impairment, clear signage including pictures as well as text etc?
- Do we have quiet areas, for example for children who are sometimes overwhelmed in the classroom/playground?
- Do we have changing/washing facilities for children who are incontinent?
- Which areas of the Academy are not accessible for students with wheelchairs? What are our priorities in making them more accessible?
- Are our playgrounds and sports facilities accessible? Can we make them more so?
- Are we planning to replace equipment/ICT? What should we consider when doing so?
- Will the new Science Lab have adjustable work surfaces?

Improve access to written information?

- What written information do we give to students at the moment? Home/Academy information? Class texts and notes? Notices?
- Is all this information accessible to all our students? How can we make it more so? Do we need any equipment or can we use what we have in a different way?
- What preferences do our students with disabilities, and their parents, have for the way information is given to them?

Aids and equipment; -

The Academy is not obliged to provide aids for individual students under its duties to make reasonable adjustments for that student. These are intended to come through the SEN framework either through a statement or a child's IEP at Academy Action, Academy Action Plus. However, the Academy will give appropriate consideration to the need for equipment to increase access to all aspects of Academy life.

Arrangements Now in Place to Improve Disabled Access: -

a) Wheel chair users: -

The re-building/re-furbishment programme should provide: -

- Lift access to each floor.
- Ramp access, exterior to building, also gives access to each floor
- There is a disability toilet for people with physical difficulties on the ground floor.

In addition, LSAs support student mobility needs around the Academy and lap-trays are provided for students unable to use a desk.

b) Hearing impaired students:

- Visited regularly by an external specialist teacher who monitors students, assesses their needs and provides advice.
- Speech & Language therapist to provide a bank of regular sessions for those students needing this.

c) Writing Difficulties:

NEOS [Word Processing Units] provided for students who:

- Struggle with writing legibly because of their SEN
- Have difficulty with pen/paper writing tasks
- Have a temporary writing difficulty due to injury
- Specialist software installed on NEOS, which provides high-quality prediction allowing learners to construct complete, grammatically correct sentences; it also contains Topic Dictionaries.

d) Specific & other Learning Difficulties:

- Specialist software will be installed on the Academy's network to support student's learning.
- In class support from TA's

e) Examination:

- The Director of Learning Support will assess the needs of students for access arrangements. Applications will be made to examining bodies, as necessary, and any special requirements implemented.

f) Other:

- For Primary testing day we will provide scribes for those physically unable to write and provide enlarged question papers for visually impaired students. We will arrange a BSL signer for profoundly deaf parents at Parents' Evenings, if and when required.

APPENDIX

Further questions

Below are questions from the DfES guidance 'Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled students' suggests asking these questions,

Section 1: How does your school deliver the curriculum?

Question	Yes	No
Do you ensure that teachers and teaching assistants have the necessary training to teach and support disabled students?		
Are your classrooms optimally organised for disabled students?		
Do lessons provide opportunities for all students to achieve?		
Are lessons responsive to pupil diversity?		
Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class?		
Are all students encouraged to take part in music, drama and physical activities?		
Do staff recognise and allow for the mental effort expended by some disabled students, for example using lip reading?		
Do staff recognise and allow for the additional time required by some disabled students to use equipment in practical work?		
Do staff provide alternative ways of giving access to experience or understanding for disabled students who cannot engage in particular activities, for example some forms of exercise in physical education?		
Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for students with disabilities?		
Are College visits, including overseas visits, made accessible to all students irrespective of attainment or impairment?		
Are there high expectations of all students?		
Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?		

Section 2: Is your school designed to meet the needs of all students?

Question	Yes	No
Does the size and layout of areas - including all academic, sporting, play, social facilities; classrooms, the assembly hall, canteen, library, gymnasium and outdoor sporting facilities, playgrounds and common rooms - allow access for all students?		
Can students who use wheelchairs move around the Academy without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, toilet facilities and showers?		
Are pathways of travel around the Academy site and parking arrangements safe, routes logical and well signed?		
Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform ALL students, including students with SEN and disability; including alarms with both visual and auditory components?		
Are non-visual guides used, to assist people to use buildings including lifts with tactile buttons?		
Could any of the décor or signage be considered to be confusing or disorientating for disabled students with visual impairment, autism or epilepsy?		
Are areas to which students should have access well lit?		
Are steps made to reduce background noise for hearing impaired students such as considering a room's acoustics, noisy equipment?		
Is furniture and equipment selected, adjusted and located appropriately?		

Section 3: How does your school deliver materials in other formats?

Question	Yes	No
Do you provide information in simple language, symbols, large print, on audiotape or in Braille for students and prospective students who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information?		
Do you ensure that information is presented to groups in a way which is user friendly for people with disabilities e.g. by reading aloud overhead projections and describing diagrams?		
Do you have the facilities such as ICT to produce written information in different formats?		
Do you ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist people with disabilities?		