

East Riding of Yorkshire Council Accessibility Position Statement

Introduction

The overall aim of this position statement is to outline how East Riding of Yorkshire Council supports schools to meet the needs of disabled pupils to maximise their independence and to raise their attainments. This document fulfils the Local Authority responsibility under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 to produce and maintain an Accessibility Strategy. This document links with East Riding of Yorkshire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2014 – 2017 and will be monitored through the SEND (0-25) Strategic Group. When the SEND Strategy is updated this document will become an appendix.

Background

The purpose of this document 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.

In the East Riding we are committed to supporting our children and young people to have the best possible start in life. While recognising the additional challenges that children and young people with SEND and their families face, we want to support them to develop their strengths and abilities.

We want all young people in the East Riding of Yorkshire to be happy, healthy, confident and safe. We want the very best for each and every young person and will work in partnership to remove barriers to achievement and narrow the gap so that everyone can reach their potential. We will harness the talent and enthusiasm of young people to ensure that all our services meet their needs.

This document has been written in accordance with the duty the LA has under equality legislation to prepare an accessibility strategy, describing how the LA will work with schools to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum;
- Improve the physical environment of schools;
- Improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils and their parents/ carers.
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This document is focused solely on the parts of the Equality Act 2010 relating to disabled children and young people and their access to schools maintained by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and to Academies within the Authority.

This document complements existing LA guidance and strategies, and should not be used in isolation without reference to local and national context and initiatives, including information published by schools to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. Guidance for schools on Public Sector Equality Duty was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in November 2012.

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).

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 legislations means that much of what is required by 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. Schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010 placed a responsibility on every local authority to produce and maintain an Accessibility Strategy.

Schedule 10 says: An accessibility strategy is a strategy for, over a prescribed period -

- a. increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools’ curriculums;
- 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 schools;
- c. improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled. The delivery of information in c. must be:
 - i. within a reasonable time;
 - ii. in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils’ disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

This document fulfils the legislative duties of East Riding Council.

Local Context

East Riding has a range of provision available to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. There is a culture of strong partnership working between the Council and schools and there are a number of specialist teams providing advice and support to schools in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. In addition to the special school provision within East Riding we have a number of schools with enhanced resources.

There is a well established Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) Network and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer providing on-going training to support provision for pupils with SEND

Increasing access to curriculum

The joint working and commissioning of education, health and care provision for children and young people required through the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code

of Practice are leading to more integrated packages of support and enhancing the access to the curriculum of pupils with disabilities. Support and training continues to be available to all schools to embed the principles of the SEND Reforms, in particular person centred approaches. This, together with the graduated approach expected by the SEND Code of Practice, should result in the curriculum being more accessible to all pupils.

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 pupils with disabilities. Schools must work with parents/ carers and pupils to develop appropriate outcomes for their personalised plans.

The local authority supports schools to respond to individual needs of pupils and the training needs of school staff through a range of specialist services. The Local Offer and schools' Individual Local Offer provides details about the provision available to support access to the curriculum for pupils with SEND and Guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions.

The local authority will continue to work in partnership with the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) and East Riding Voices in Partnership (ERVIP), the local Parent Carer Forum, to engage with parents and carers of pupils with SEND to inform and continue to develop good practice within schools.

Improving the physical environment

Schools in East Riding are increasingly aware that reasonable adjustments may be required to prevent disabled pupils being at a significant disadvantage to non-disabled pupils.

The Act does not define what is 'reasonable', this allows flexibility for different sets of circumstances. In considering what adjustments it is reasonable to make a school may consider:

- The financial costs of making the adjustment
- How effective a particular adjustment would be in overcoming the significant disadvantage
- The practicality of the adjustment
- The interests of other pupils and prospective pupils
- Health and safety requirements

This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to school 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 physical access to existing buildings. Making reasonable adjustments can improve physical access and schools do need to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, as it is likely that at some point any school will have a disabled pupil. Schools should ensure that in an emergency, there is provision to evacuate all building users, including disabled people, to a place of safety. Schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council is committed to developing the range of provision available across the authority and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for pupils with SEND.

Improving access to information

East Riding's Local Offer, developed to meet the requirement of the Children and Families Act 2014, makes information more accessible. The Local Offer is available at www.eastridinglocaloffer.org.uk and was coproduced with parents and carers and pupils to ensure that information is accessible. Families who do not have access to the internet or who prefer to access information in other ways may access the Local Offer by making contact with the Families Information Service Hub (FISH) by telephone. The FISH helpline will ensure that information available on the Local Offer is made accessible.

The lives of everybody are being transformed significantly by the developing and widening use of ICT. This is particularly true for those pupils who are unable to communicate or access the curriculum using traditional methods.

Specialist education services are available to support schools in providing information in adapted formats. This is used for those pupils who find it difficult to access information due to specific sensory (hearing and vision) needs and physical disability.

Conclusion

This document fulfils the Local Authority responsibility under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 to produce and maintain an Accessibility Strategy. This document links with East Riding of Yorkshire SEND Strategy 2014 – 2017 and will be monitored through the SEND (0-25) Strategic Group. When the SEND Strategy is refreshed this document will become an appendix.