Foreword

This is North Yorkshire County Council’s Accessibility Strategy for 2018-2020, which details how we will:

1. Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools’ curriculums

2. Improve the physical environment of the schools so as to further allow disabled pupils to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools

3. Improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

This strategy is produced as required by Section 10 of the Equality Act 2010. All schools have their own Accessibility Plan which will show how they will ensure improved access to education for disabled pupils. This will be found on individual schools’ websites along with their SEN Information report. This Accessibility Strategy details how we will support schools to fulfil their responsibility with regard to accessibility for disabled pupils.
Introduction

Our vision is that North Yorkshire is:

A place of opportunity where all children and young people are happy, healthy and achieving, as described in "Young and Yorkshire 2"

We want to improve access to education and educational achievement for disabled pupils to ensure real inclusion within mainstream education.

This accessibility strategy sets out the approach that we are taking to increase access to education for disabled children and young people. Our aim is that disabled children and young people can benefit from educational provision to the same extent that children without disabilities can.

This strategy applies only to schools: The Equality Act requires ALL providers to make reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantaging pupils with disabilities, but schools have an additional duty to plan for better access for disabled pupils as detailed below. The reasonable adjustments duty and a wider and more strategic planning approach for schools are intended to complement each other.

Everyone working in and alongside schools should be aware of the Equality Act and its implications for children and young people, their families and the wider community and be aware of their duties within the Act.

The Equality Act describes General, Specific and Reasonable Adjustment Duties.

The General duty (or Public Sector Equality Duty – PSED) , relates to person’s identity, their protected characteristics and includes race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. The PSED requires public bodies to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Specific Duty requires schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the General Duty. The main requirement is for schools to prepare and publish a disability equality scheme, involving disabled people in the development of this scheme, and to implement the scheme and report on it.

The reasonable adjustment duty requires schools to take positive steps to ensure that pupils with SEND can fully participate in the education provided in the setting as well as enjoy other benefits, facilities and services provided for all students.

Many reasonable adjustments are inexpensive and will often involve a change in practice rather than the provision of expensive pieces of equipment or additional staff. Settings need to plan in advance what SEND pupils will require and what adjustments needs to be made.
Duties on schools

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will improve the access to education for disabled pupils over time. The school’s Accessibility Plan should be published on the school website, and hard copies provided upon request. There should be a link between the school’s SEN information and the Accessibility Plan.

North Yorkshire context

In North Yorkshire we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that children are best supported to grow and achieve with their own families. Taking into account significant changes in the national policy, there is now a focus on collaborative working between schools, partner agencies and the local authority through such developments as the Children and Family Act 2014.

Identification and removing barriers to access and participation must take into account extended services, new ways of working and new approaches to curriculum delivery in and around partnerships of schools, both mainstream and special. Early identification and response to issues arising is paramount, and it is the function of this document to provide an overview of the provision that will ensure our inclusive strategy is championed throughout our services for children and young people.

Our data

In North Yorkshire we support 9,591 pupils who require additional and specialist support, with 936 pupils in specialist provision\(^1\)

Every local area is required to have Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The core aim of North Yorkshire’s JSNA is to improve the public’s health and reduce inequalities across the whole County. We do this by bringing together local authorities, community voluntary sector service users, NHS partners and others to research and agree a comprehensive local picture of health and wellbeing needs. The JSNA encourages a joined up approach to the development of services and is used to identify priorities for commissioning. More information on the North Yorkshire JSNA can be found here: [http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/jsna](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/jsna)

The [Children and Young People's Plan - Young and Yorkshire 2](http://www.nypartnerships.org.uk/jsna) explains more about how partnership work is being carried out to improve the experience of children and young people in North Yorkshire.

\(^1\) Source: October 2017 School Census
How does North Yorkshire improve access to education for disabled pupils in the 3 areas stated in this Accessibility Strategy?

1. Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum.

Ensuring access to the curriculum is vital in providing equal opportunities to children and young people with SEND. Schools need to consider how to improve the accessibility of the curriculum, covering both teaching and learning, trips and visits, after school activities and extended school activities.

Schools are responsible for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and play a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for all pupils. Therefore schools are required to have in plan an ‘Accessibility Plan’ that demonstrates what actions the school is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly for those pupils with SEND. All schools must “use their best endeavours” to provide “high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised” and which should “meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people.” (SEN Code of Practice 1.24).

The local authority is responsible for securing the provision of services which address the needs of all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable and their families and carers.

In discharging these responsibilities, the Director of Children’s Services (DCS), through the Children & Young Peoples Service (CYPS), works closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people (CYP). The council and its partners provide a range of services to support schools in making inclusive and accessible provision. Details are available in the Local Offer at: https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/send-local-offer

Services offered to schools by the council are provided by our Inclusion Support service and include training in teaching strategies to upskill the workforce. Full details of the core responsibilities of schools and the support available to them is found in the SEND Mainstream Guidance

Some children may have needs that require specialist support. Currently we provide specialist education through our Enhanced Mainstream Schools, our Pupil Referral Schools and our Special Schools. Details of all the schools in North Yorkshire can be found on the Local Offer.

During 2017 and 2018, we are developing a forward thinking Strategic Plan for Children and Young People with SEND. Further information is found here: https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/special-provision-capital-funding

Some disabled children require equipment to enable access to the curriculum. This may include items which are generally provided as reasonable adjustments by all schools such as pencil grips, writing slopes, height adjustable tables etc. Schools should also provide highly specialist equipment such as supportive seating, radio aids, hoist slings etc. and in these cases they can request funding from the local authority towards the cost of this equipment. Schools are expected to fund the first £500 per child/young person per financial year before requesting additional funding from the local authority.
In some circumstances, NHS services also support access to the curriculum for individual pupils, including Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Services are also available which are not directly Council-managed – schools are able to use their SEN budget to purchase as required. Advice on sources of learning support is available on the Local Offer.

2. Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided.

Reasonable adjustments may be needed to ensure equal access to the environment, including the creation of safe spaces, calming areas, and individual workstations.

Support services from health, social care and education services are available to advise educational settings about suitable and reasonable adaptations to the inside and outside environment to help include pupils with SEND. Funding from the local authority is available to assist with such adaptations. Schools are expected to fund the first £500 per child/young person per financial year, after which they can request additional funding from the local authority from a centrally held budget.

The council has a planning duty to improve the physical accessibility of school buildings over time. The council strategy has been i) improvement of physical access for known pupils in the system and ii) improving accessibility when undertaking schemes generated through other priorities e.g. additional capacity schemes.

The Council’s capital priorities for the school estate are published each time a new Capital Programme is approved. Of late this has been annually in line with Central Government funding allocations. One of the aims of the schools capital programme is to improve the standard of physical accessibility alongside planned capital investment.

Where there is a new build, extension or refurbishment, it is expected that the project will incorporate where possible any access facilities needed for existing pupils, as well as, in accordance with its statutory responsibilities, anticipate the needs of future pupils (e.g. level access, height adjustable work stations).

Councils receive no dedicated access funding for adaptation, improvement or alteration at any schools. Therefore central funding for accessibility improvements related to pupils joining or transferring to an individual school will need to be considered by the council as these priorities arise. There is a requirement on schools to notify the council of access needs, and parents need to identify on school admission forms that their child has physical access requirements. Funding for such improvements will come from School Condition Grant which is the annual allocation to NYCC from Central Government for the maintenance of our school estate.
3. Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

This covers planning to make information (normally provided by the school to its pupils) accessible to disabled pupils. This should take account of pupils’ disabilities, pupils’ and parents’ preferred formats, and be made available within a reasonable time frame.

The local authority works with partners to ensure provision of a range of support services from health, social care and education to advise educational settings about suitability and reasonable adaptations. This advice and guidance includes topics such as: issues of physical space, opportunities to present information visually, and organisational strategies to complete activities. The SEND Mainstream document provides full information on how we work with mainstream schools in supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities.

The local authority provides clear guidance to schools on what they are expected to deliver as part of the core offer. The Inclusion Support Service comprises a team of highly trained specialists who work to support schools. This support is available for staff from schools and settings as well as parents and health professionals for CYP 0-25. to request via referral through the Single Point of Access (SPA) process.

Additionally, the local authority uses data collected via SENCo networks and other sources to identify areas for improvement, when targeted work is delivered to schools. This has included work with SENCO networks, Flying High (our network of young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who work with us to co-produce and develop procedures / policies / provision) and NYPACT (North Yorkshire’s parent / carer network) to improve our Education Health and Care documentation and processes.

The local authority works with partners to ensure that information regarding educational provision appears on the Local Offer website and is accessible in a variety of formats and languages. Statistical information relating to usage of the website is used to constantly develop accessibility of information.

Support provided to schools can take various forms including:

- Teaching and provision of training to children and young people, parents, schools and settings and work closely together with other organisations.
- Teach specialist developmental skills to the children and young people.
- Carrying out specialist assessments and monitoring children’s progress, and providing on-going advice on how to meet the needs of individual children.
- Facilitation of multi-agency work including health and social care professionals and school staff.
- Provision of specialist equipment to support learning.
- Deliver specialist individualised programmes and skills training to children and young people with sensory and physical needs in homes, schools and settings under the guidance of the Specialist Teachers.
- Prepare resources which support an individual’s progress through the programmes.
- Provide support to school/setting and Service staff in relation to technical issues, installation and use of specialist equipment and software, provided by the Service.
- Advise and deliver training to schools and the wider work force about the moving and handling of children and young people who have physical impairments.

Further detailed information is available in the SEND Mainstream Guidance document.
Evaluation and Review

This Strategy covers the period 2018-2020. The overall responsibility for the Accessibility Strategy lies with the Assistant Director, Inclusion, CYPS. It will be updated termly by the Head of SEND and a full review will take place in 2020.

This strategy will be published on the North Yorkshire Local Offer website.

Key References:

The Equality Act 2010 and schools (DfE advice: May 2014):

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools

SEN Code of Practice: