



ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

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Improving access to the physical environment of schools

Increasing access to the curriculum

Improving the delivery of information

Review date: September 2016

Next review: September 2018

Freedom of Information category: Full Public Access

Linked Policies include: Inclusion, Special Needs, Equal Opportunities, Disability Equality From September 2002, access to education was covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. LAs and schools are now under a new duty to plan to improve the accessibility of schools to disabled pupils over time.

LAs are required to produce accessibility strategies for all of the maintained schools they are responsible for. Schools are required to produce their own accessibility plans.

The strategies and plans, which should be reviewed every 3 years, need to cover:

- Improving access to the physical environment of schools
- Increasing access to the curriculum
- Improving the delivery of information

Aims and Objectives

The Governing Body of Grovelands School is committed to ensuring that the Accessibility Strategy, as outlined in this policy, meets the needs of the school, the pupils and parents and that the Accessibility Plan is completed and put into practice within a reasonable timeframe and within the resources available.

The aims and objectives of the Grovelands Accessibility Policy are to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum and take advantage of the full education programme of events, activities and services.
- Increase the extent to which the parents of disabled and SEN pupils can become involved in their child's education and school activities.
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- Improve the physical environment of the School in order to increase the extent to which the whole school community (disabled pupils, parents, staff, governors and visitors) can take advantage of educational and training opportunities and associated services.
- Improve the delivery of written information produced for non-disabled pupils in formats which take account of views expressed by the pupils or parents about their preferred means of communication.
- Improve the delivery of written information (including letters, timetables, event flyers and newsletters) produced for parents, staff, governors and visitors and, as far as possible, make them available in formats which can be understood by the visually impaired, hard of hearing and those for whom English is a second language.
- If the school decides it needs to seek advice from an access consultant, it will seek information from the appropriate body: the National Register of Access Consultants.

Roles and Responsibilities

The LA

The LA has a duty to take a strategic approach to planning for increased disability access to the schools for which they are responsible under the Act. This could include linking accessibility projects to all other capital building work where appropriate. For example, if refurbishing school buildings, the LA should consider whether aids to physical accessibility, such as ramps or handrails or décor schemes, could be incorporated into the plan.

The Act requires LAs to allocate adequate resources to implement their accessibility strategies. This means recognising this as legitimate expenditure and incorporating it into current and future budgets, both recurrent and capital.

The DfES Guidance is that, to gain support, the LA needs to ensure that projects improve access to mainstream education in one or more of the following ways:

- Enhanced continuation of access across nursery and primary phases.
- Reduced home to school travel time for pupils by making a local school accessible.
- Improved physical access to the school; for example by including setting down and picking up points, ramps, handrails and lifts, and improvements to escape provisions.
- Improved physical movement around the building, including adaptations for sensory disability such as improved colour schemes, and access to, say, the toilet facilities.
- Improved access to the national curriculum, including specialist furniture such as desks, rise and fall tables, sinks and ovens; and information and communication technology equipment (both hardware and software).
- Improved accommodation within the building including toilets for disabled pupils, medical rooms, and sound proofing for pupils with hearing disabilities.

- Projects should contribute to the Local Authority's overall strategy for increasing access and inclusion for pupils with special educational needs.

Once LAs have information on the barriers to access for disabled pupils in their maintained schools, it is their responsibility to make appropriate plans and identify actions for overcoming the barriers and prioritise their work. In considering which school or schools to select, the LA is asked to take into account the capacity of each school to take advantage of the access improvements, including the school's current SEN policy, teaching practices and ethos. It may also wish to consider the degree to which facilities may be used by the wider community.

The School

The Head of School, Executive Head, SLT and Governing Body at Grovelands are jointly responsible for producing the Grovelands Accessibility Plan and ensuring it is implemented.

Whilst the Act imposes a distinct planning duty on schools, we are not required to undertake a separate planning process. Therefore, once the initial process of identifying accessibility requirements has been completed, Grovelands will incorporate its Accessibility Planning duty within other actions plans, including the School Development Plan.

Governors

The Governing Body has delegated its responsibility for producing the Grovelands Accessibility Policy and assisting in the development of an Action Plan to the Community & Environment Committee, with support to be provided by the Standards & School Improvement Committee and SEN Governor. Before approving the Accessibility Plan, the Governors will ensure that views of parents of disabled pupils, staff (most particularly the SENCO) and representatives of organisations which make use of the school facilities are taken into account.

Accessibility Action Planning

When the barriers to access have been identified, Grovelands is required to produce an Action Plan listing all of the necessary adaptations (including realistic cost estimates). These need to be divided into categories such as Staff training, Learning and Teaching practices, Refurbishment and maintenance (e.g. use of colour when redecorating and replacing floor coverings or furniture), Minor capital expenditure and Major capital expenditure.

The Grovelands Accessibility Action Plan sets out the school's short-term, medium-term and long-term priorities and strategies for improving access to the Physical Environment, the Curriculum and to Information and Resources. The Plan also includes clear implementation arrangements and a timeframe for the work to be completed.

Consultations to Eliminate Barriers

An important part of the Action Plan development and review process will include consultations with all stakeholder representatives to agree priorities and the most appropriate solutions. To this end, we will seek the views of disabled pupils, parents of disabled pupils, staff (most particularly the SENCO and other specialist staff) and representatives of organisations which make use of the school facilities.

The school will also make use of expertise available where required, including local voluntary and disability organisations who might be able to bring a useful perspective to help identify practices and arrangements that act as a barrier to admitting, accommodating and including disabled children.

Improving Access to the Physical Environment

This strand of the Grovelands planning duty includes improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education. Much of the work in this area will involve improving access to school buildings.

To identify the areas with potential for improvement, the Chair of Governors, and Chair of the former Premises Committee and the Administration Manager carried out an initial assessment of the Physical Environment in Spring term 2004. This covered:

- Entrances to buildings and to classrooms
- Main Entrance, Foyer and Front Office Reception
- Signage throughout the school, inside and out Doors, Steps and Stairs Stairways and corridors.
- Washroom facilities for pupils and adults
- Parking facilities

It was agreed that improved access to the physical environment can be achieved by a number of adaptations. These included:

- Ramps for wheelchairs at the front entrance
- Handrails and ramps in Nursery block
- Designated disabled parking spaces
- Safe pedestrian walkway in the car park
- Easier wheelchair access to the admin area and staff/visitor washroom facilities
- Adapted toilets for pupils and for adults
- Height adjustable desks and chairs in the staffroom and ICT suite. Automatic lift to 1st floor staff room

Improving Access to the Curriculum

To identify the areas of the Curriculum with potential for improvement within Grovelands School, the Head of School and SENCO carried out an initial assessment. This covered:

- The culture and ethos of the school
- Access to the curriculum, including learning and teaching aids
- Learning and teaching practices
- Staff work areas and equipment (including Front Office, Admin Office, Head of School's Office and Staffroom, Copy production area)
- ICT Suite
- In-class resources, equipment and facilities (including lighting, noise, layout and room space, storage space etc).
- Staff training (e.g to ensure the needs of a disabled pupil joining reception class will be met further on in the school).
- The provision of auxiliary aids and services.

Improving Access to Information

The school recognises that the information provided should take account of pupils' disabilities as well as pupils' and parents' preferred formats; and should be made available within a reasonable time frame. Alternative formats to be considered might include large print, audio tape, braille, a recognised symbol system, use of ICT, or by providing the information orally, through lip speaking or in sign language. In its initial assessment of information accessibility, identified improvements included:

- Way-finding signs with icons as well as wording at all access points to the site, the school, classroom, cloakroom and toilet facilities
- Visual as well as audible fire safety and security alarms
- The provision of written and alternative format information where required

Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of the Grovelands Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan will focus not only on whether goals and targets have been met, but by the achievement in terms of positive changes such as:

- Improvements in the physical accessibility of school buildings.
- Evidence of the greater involvement of disabled pupils in the full life of the school (for example participation in after school clubs, special events and celebrations, sporting and cultural activities and on school trips).
- Observable changes in the confidence of staff in teaching and supporting disabled children with a range of needs.
- Greater satisfaction of disabled pupils and their parents with the provision made for disabled pupils.
- Improvements in pupil achievement and attainment across the curriculum.

Accessibility Progress assessments are to be carried out in the Summer and Autumn terms by the Head of School (or delegated member of the SLT), Chair of the Community & Environment Committee and Chair of the Standards & School Improvement Committee. A summary of their reports will be incorporated in the Head of School's Termly Report to the Governing Body:

Review date: September 2016

Next Review: September 2018

Signed:  Head of School

Signed:  Executive Head

Signed:  Chair of Governors