

# The Birches Specialist Support School

## Accessibility Policy and Plan



**Date Reviewed:** February 2022

**Reviewed by:** F Shah Deputy Headteacher and Equality Impact Assessment Team.

Signed: .....  
On behalf of the Governors

Signed: .....  
Head teacher

**Date of next review:** February 2025

## **Document Purpose**

This policy reflects the values and philosophy of The Birches School in relation to Accessibility. It sets out a framework within which teaching and non-teaching staff can operate. This policy is drawn up in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended by the SEN and Disability Act (SENDA). It draws on the guidance set out in "Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils", issued by the DCSF.

The Birches School caters for pupils with Autism (ASC), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound & Multiple Learning difficulties (PMLD). The school focuses its resources to ensure equality of access for all pupils regardless of disability with individual needs assessed and resourced in order to ensure developmental progression in all areas.

The school recognises and values parents' & carers' knowledge of their child's disability and its effect on his/her ability to carry out normal activities, and respects the parents' and child's right to confidentiality.

The school provides all pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, differentiated and adjusted to meet the needs of individual pupils and their preferred learning styles; and endorses the key principles in the National Curriculum 2000 framework, which underpin the development of a more inclusive curriculum, including:-

- setting suitable learning challenges
- responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
- overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

## **Audience**

This policy, having been presented to and agreed upon by the whole staff and Governing Body is distributed for the information of:

- All teaching staff
- All teaching assistants
- All support staff

A copy of the policy is available in:

- The Head Teacher's Office

This is available for:

- School Governors
- External Professionals
- OFSTED
- Parents & Carers
- Visiting teachers
- Other interested adults (social and psychological services etc.

## 1. Schools' Planning Duty

1.1. Schools need to carry out accessibility planning for pupils with a disability.

- To promote equality of opportunity for disabled people: pupils, staff, parents, carers and other people who use the school or may wish to; and
- To prepare and publish a **Disability Equality Scheme** to show how they will meet these duties.

1.2. According to the Act a “disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has an effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. The effect must be substantial, long term and adverse. The Equality Act definition of disability covers physical disabilities, sensory and other mental impairments and learning disabilities.

1.3. This **Accessibility Plan** forms part of the school's Disability Equality Scheme and is a statutory duty. It sets out how the local governing body plans to proactively improve the equality of opportunity for those within its school community who have a disability. The duty is to anticipate and plan for their future needs.

1.4. In accordance with the Act the plan focuses on three ‘key areas’:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services;
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

1.5. It is a requirement that the school's **Accessibility Plan** is resourced, implemented and reviewed and revised as necessary. An action plan is attached as Appendix 1 showing the priorities identified for action along with how they are to be addressed within a given timeframe. A success criteria has been set so progress and outcomes can be measured.

1.6. The plan is to be reviewed and updated at least every three years.

### Leadership and Commitment

The Birches School has high ambitions for its' disabled pupils, expects them to participate and achieve in every aspect of school life and is fully committed to achieve the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes for all its' pupils. The Birches School makes all pupils, staff, parents/carers and visitors feel welcome irrespective of race, colour, creed or impairment and aims to identify and remove any barriers to people with disabilities. The Birches School is committed to equal opportunities and implementing the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement. This is demonstrated by the way we:

- set appropriate learning challenges and targets for all pupils

- are responsive to the diverse needs of pupils and staff
- overcome potential barriers to learning and participation in all areas for individuals and groups of pupils.
- Passionate about including all of our children and the community in the life of the school
- Respectful of the varied needs of our children, their parents and carers and other stakeholders
- Organised in putting the steps in place to work towards the goals we have set,
- Understanding of the need to address all aspects of the equality plan
- Dedicated to ensuring all targets are achieved within timescale set.

## 2. Schools Aims

2.1. At The Birches we are committed to establishing equality for all pupils, their parents, staff and other users of the school. This is reflected in our school aims, which state that The Birches School aims to:

- Provide a happy, healthy, supportive and stimulating learning environment to enable the pupils to develop maximum independence by acquiring skills and progressing according to their developmental levels.
- Provide a comprehensive curriculum that is broad, balanced, differentiated and relevant and works towards the National Curriculum.
- Develop positive working relationships with parents and carers for the benefit of the pupils and the whole school community.
- Provide pupils with the opportunity to share social and functional educational activities with their peers both within school, other schools and the wider community.
- Ensure equality of access to all aspects of the curriculum regardless of the religion, race, gender, culture, circumstances or disability of each pupil.
- Assist each pupil to develop by providing a wide range of personal and social opportunities.
- Foster a multi-disciplinary approach, which utilises the expertise of other specialists.
- Develop self-esteem, foster respect for each other and accept and celebrate individual personalities.
- Develop and support a professional staff team and provide for their individual needs within the framework of the School Improvement Plan.

2.2. In drawing up this **Accessibility Plan** the school set the following priorities:

- To provide safe access throughout the school for all school users

- To ensure that the learning and teaching environment and the resources used are suitable for all staff and pupils, tailoring the requirements to suit individual needs.
- To provide training to all staff regarding the needs of disabled people and how to provide assistance to enable them to enjoy the school experience as fully as possible.

2.3. In addition parents of children and young people with a disability were consulted to ensure all needs and areas of concern had been picked up.

2.4. As stated above, The Birches School is committed to equal opportunities and inclusion. This Accessibility Plan is not a standalone document but should be considered alongside the following school policy documents:

- Disability Equality Scheme
- Special Educational Needs
- Equal Opportunities
- The Birches School's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer
- The Birches' Safeguarding policy and arrangements
- Health & Safety policy
- Staff related policies, e.g. Risk Assessments, Return to Work

This plan itself will also be used to advise and inform other school planning documents and policies.

2.5. It will be the responsibility of the whole school community to implement this scheme in a manner which promotes the inclusive ethos of our school.

### **3. Current Good Practice which supports this duty**

3.1. The school's commitment to inclusivity has already been recognised by Ofsted who stated in the school's last inspection that:

*'A spirit of inclusion and equality pervades the school, characterised by harmony and respect. Leaders capitalise on very positive working relationships with staff, parents and all linked professionals. They have developed a school that is vibrant and diverse, holding pupils' development at the absolute heart of all that the school strives to achieve'*

Ofsted Inspection Report November 2016

### **3.2. Current Activities: Increasing the extent to which all our disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum**

3.2.1. The Birches has close working relationships with its feeder schools with thorough transition arrangements in the summer term before starting at school. This may include multi-agency meetings with parents and all professionals involved in supporting the child.

3.2.2. The school SEN policy ensures that staff identify, assess and arrange suitable provision for pupils with special educational needs and / or disability. Working with the Manchester SEN team, health professionals and Educational Psychology Service, staff ensure additional resources, including staffing, are allocated where appropriate.

3.2.3. The Birches staff also provide additional support for pupils and colleagues in implementing strategies for improving pupils' behaviour and access to learning.

3.2.4. The school works closely with specialist services including:

- Advisory Teacher for Hearing Impaired
- Advisory Teacher for Visual Impairment
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Educational Psychology Service
- Manchester SEN
- CAMHS
- GPs and paediatricians
- School Nurse
- Asthma/Epilepsy Nurse
- Counselling
- Mobility Orientation Team
- Other advisory services and charities

3.2.5. The school's governors, teachers, Teaching Assistants and Lunch-time Support Assistants have a wide range of qualifications, training and experience of working with children with a varied range of needs including:

- Hearing impairment
- Physical disability
- Visual impairment
- Specific medical conditions including epilepsy, asthma, eczema, ADHD, diabetes
- Specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia
- Autism
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- Emotional difficulties including attachment disorder or bereavement
- Developmental disorders, e.g. Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Profound and multiple difficulties including specific genetic disorders, e.g. Down's Syndrome
- Specialised feeding e.g. gastric feeding
- Physiotherapy

3.2.6. Facilities and support currently on offer at the school include:

- The majority of the school site is accessible for all pupils e.g. ramps for wheel chair access, lift to second floor
- Designated areas and support for 1:1 or small-group work
- Parental support Advisor to access Early Help and other agencies
- Advice, assessment and support from Speech and Language Therapist
- Communication Support Advisor supporting SaLT interventions and school's 'total communication' environment, including social communication
- SEAL small group work (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)
- BSL sign language
- Variety of access technology e.g. switches, iPads, interactive whiteboards
- Range of literacy and maths interventions
- Fully accessible swimming pool with hoist and changing facilities

- Access to ALL extra-curricular activities, art enrichment groups, school visits, and appropriate risk assessment
- Advice and support from School Nurse Team
- Medical Room and Paediatric First Aiders
- MIDAS (alternative provision)
- Life Skills
- Outdoor learning

3.2.7. The school celebrates diversity and its curriculum promotes tolerance, awareness and acceptance of all pupils. Resources and activities are chosen to show disability and diversity positively.

### **3.3. Current Actions: improving access to the physical environment of the school**

3.3.1. This element of the planning duty covers all areas of the physical environment such as external areas, buildings and fixtures and fittings.

3.3.2. There are very few parts of the school to which disabled pupils have limited or no access.

3.3.3. In addition the environment is continually enhanced through the school's building maintenance and redecoration programme.

### **3.4. Current Actions: Improving the delivery of information to persons with a disability**

3.4.1. School staff are aware of the services available for converting written information into alternative formats.

## **4. Review and Assessment of Impact**

4.1. The **Accessibility Plan** is reviewed every 3 years by SLT.

4.2. The review will look at each action and assess whether the success criteria has been met. Any actions that are incomplete or require further attention are carried forward to the next action plan.



4.3. To allow the school to track progress and demonstrate how it is actively fulfilling its duty. The actions have been RAG rated and shaded as follows:

- GREEN for actions that are complete
- RED for actions that are either incomplete or to be carried over to the next action plan
- AMBER for actions that are complete but require on-going activity

4.5. Information on how to view this plan is included in the Disability Equality Scheme, in the school prospectus and on the school's website.

## Policy Information and Review

Review frequency: every 3 years

Date	Version	Changes made	By whom (name and role)	Due date for next review	Reviewed & Ratified by Govs. (sign and date)
March 2018	1	N/A	SLT	March 2021	
June 2018	2	Policy reviewed, re-formatted and accessibility plan simplified	F Shah DHT	June 2021	
July 2018	<p><i>06/07/18 The Policy Ratification Committee has met and requested that all current statutory policies are ratified for one year only whilst an appropriate cycle of ratification is implemented. Policies will then be approved for their full length of term either through the Full Governing Body or one of the committees following an agreed plan of ratification.</i></p>				
February 2019	2	Dates changed for ratification purposes – policy is the same just the dates altered	F Shah DHT	February 2022	
14/01/21	2	Impact column of action plan updated.	F Shah DHT	February 2022	
25/05/21	3	Equality Impact Assessment Team established and met on 25/05/21. Accessibility Plan formulated and written at this meeting in order to update the policy and plan.	F Shah DHT + EIA Team	February 2022	
28/01/22	4	Accessibility plan updated as attached below. Next EIA team meeting is May 2022.	F Shah DHT + EIA Team	February 2025	

## Accessibility Plan

12/01/2022

Written by: Equality Impact Assessment Team (R O'Hara, Headteacher, F Shah, Deputy Headteacher, B Clifford Equalities Governor, V Lygo Staff team representative, S Jeffrey Speech Therapist and Therapies Team representative). Date: 25/05/2021

AIMS	ACTIONS	TIMESCALE	MEASURABLE OUTCOMES	LEAD PERSON + STAFF INVOLVED/OTHER AGENCIES	IMPACT (RAG rate and complete upon review)
Curriculum					
<p>Identified and consistent visual supports for children to access the curriculum.</p>	<p>-Objects of reference through the work of the communication team including partnership working with SALT and OT. -Staff taking ownership of parts of the curriculum through subject co-ordination and special events leads. -Auditing of plans for the curriculum and special events.</p>	<p>Academic year 2021-22</p>	<p>Objects of reference in use effectively.  Visual supports referenced clearly in the curriculum and in plans for special events.  Curriculum audits and subject deep dives.</p>	<p>Communication Team Siobhan Jeffrey.  Curriculum Lead.</p>	<p>10/01/22 List of current SALT objects of reference emailed to all staff by J Lloyd, for their use and review – for staff to audit and liaise with the communication team on these as needed e.g. to request replacements. Also, on 10/01/22, J Lloyd emailed on behalf of the communication team the PMLD daily reference boxes list (of daily colours and textures) to our 2 PMLD classes, Butterflies and Busy Bees. Butterflies responded that they also have a smell for each day too. Support offered from the communication team to</p>

					ensure consistency and standardisation with these.
Physical environment					
To develop a sensory wall in school to support pupil readiness for learning.	-To develop an area in school as a 'sensory wall'. -To provide additional space for pupils to have sensory breaks out of class, to help with transition and regulation of sensory needs.	To be ready for September 2021.	Pupils supported with their sensory regulation needs and reduced incidents of sensory dysregulation.  A calmer learning environment. Pupils ready to learn.	Isobel Davies, Sensory Team Hannah Reed, OT Janet Lloyd, OT Support	Established September 2021 – reference email sent by J Lloyd on 13/09/21 – to all staff outlining 'a <i>Sensory Diet Pathway for pupils who may find it beneficial for alerting/calming activities to get them 'Ready for work', or for 'Movement Breaks'. The Pathway is situated along the corridor opposite the Pool. The pathway is set out with visuals.'</i>
Accessibility of information for pupils					
Clarity of pupil accessible learning intentions for all children.	All cohorts to ensure that at all levels, learning intentions are shared appropriately.	To be ready for September 2021.	Curriculum documents for all cohorts.  Enabling environments documentation.	Curriculum Lead.  Cohort leads.	Reviewed 03/11/21 by L Whittaker and C Shaw as on email of the same date –  It is important for staff at all levels are aware of what the learning intentions are for all children they are supporting. As we begin to focus our attention on implementation of the new curriculum, we have identified that there is a need for staff training on appropriate target setting. There are lots of inconsistencies at present, and greater consistency needs to be

					<p>established. We plan to work in cohorts to allow teachers and teams to work collectively to create meaningful targets with a consistent use of language. The introduction of progress pathway documents has already started to lay the foundations of this. Current practices such as progress files/reporting to parents on Dojo have been a focus during training times to ensure consistency and appropriate detail of feedback and we will continue to review this. We feel it is equally important that learning intentions are also shared with the children in a way that is appropriate, and presented in a meaningful way (Boardmaker symbols/objects to aid understanding etc). As we further explore the possibilities of 'Evidence for Learning', we hope that we can develop a clear sequence of progression against the relevant frameworks that are featured within the app. A next step is also to review PPPs, ensuring these are mirror outcomes on the EHCP and that evidence can be</p>
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					collated accordingly in one central place.
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