



Walthamstow School For Girls

“Neglect not the gift that is in thee”

Policy Document

Accessibility Plan

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I. INTRODUCTION

On 1 October 2010, the Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Sex Discrimination Act.

The Act defines disability as when a person has a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.' Some specified medical conditions, HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are all considered as disabilities, regardless of their effect. The Act sets out details of everything that may be relevant when determining whether a person meets the definition of disability. Long term is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.

Schools need to carry out accessibility planning for disabled pupils. These are the same duties as previously existed under the DDA and have been replicated in the Equality Act 2010. Schools must implement accessibility plans which are aimed at:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
- improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided
- improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty') that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and Academies, and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy & maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. It has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

This Accessibility Plan sets out the school's proposals to increase access to education for all pupils in the three areas required by the planning duties in the Equality Act 2010.

- increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school curriculum
- improving the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled students 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

It is a requirement that the school's Accessibility Plan is resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised as necessary.

2. SCHOOL CONTEXT

2.1 Vision and Values

The Equality Act places a duty on schools to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment related to disability
- promote Equal Opportunities between disabled people and other people
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life

- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even when that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others

A school is judged to discriminate if:

- it treats a disabled student or prospective student less favourably than another for a reason related to their disability without justification
- it fails, without justification, to take reasonable steps to avoid placing disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage ("reasonable adjustments" duty)

Walthamstow School for Girls is committed to providing an excellent education for all students, regardless of any disability.

The school's aims include:

- to ensure that students achieve the highest academic standards of which they are capable
- to provide a wide range of educational experiences for every student

The School's Equal Opportunities Policy states that:

"All students have the right to equal opportunities for education".

The school's Special Educational Needs policy states that:

"We work in partnership with parents/carers, the local education authority and other schools to remove barriers to learning and participation, so that all students can have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential".

2.2 Information from Student Data

The school used the following definition of disability:

- a physical impairment
- a sensory impairment
- a mental health condition
- a learning or cognitive difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) or communication impairment (e.g. autistic spectrum disorder)
- a long standing health condition or illness e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, epilepsy

The school assesses its strengths and weaknesses in terms of providing accessibility for all by considering the following:

1. The level of staff awareness of what the Equality Act requires of them
2. The presence of disabled students in the school and the pattern of their participation in the life of the school, for example:
 - the profile of disabled students coming into the school and of those who may not have been admitted to the school up until now
 - patterns of attendance and exclusion
 - areas of the curriculum to which disabled students may have limited or no access at the moment
 - the participation of disabled students in off-site activities
 - parts of the school to which disabled students may have limited or no access at the moment

3. The impact on disabled students of the way the school is organised, for example:
 - school's policies, practices and procedures relating to; anti-bullying, school trips, the way risk assessments are carried out, learning and teaching, time-tabling, the administration of medicines
 - the physical environment of the school including personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs)
 - the curriculum
 - the ways in which information is currently provided for disabled students
 - the priorities currently set in other plans, particularly the School Improvement Plan
4. Outcomes for disabled students, including:
 - a detailed analysis of outcome data: exams, accredited learning and end of key stage outcomes
 - detailed information showing how well disabled students are accessing the curriculum, for example: lesson observations in different curriculum areas
 - achievements in extra-curricular activities
5. The impact on disabled parents/carers, staff, governors and other stakeholders of
 - the physical environment of the school including PEEPs
 - the systems of communication and provision of information

The following methods of data collection were used:

- analysis of school records e.g. attendance & exclusion figures, exam results, medical records
- surveys, questionnaires, interviews with students, parents, Governors, staff
- analysis of informal feedback e.g. comments in the suggestion box
- observation of external visitors, consultants, experts

2.3 Consultation Process

The original Disability Equality Scheme (DES) which this Accessibility Plan builds upon was written by a working group of key stakeholders in the school. All members of the student community, staff, parents/carers and Governing Body were invited to either join this working group or give feedback to it. The work of the group was publicised via posters in school, school bulletin notices, information in the Greensheet and Governors' meetings.

A number of parents and students gave feedback to the group. The working group comprised:

- the Headteacher
- the SENCO
- a member of support staff
- a midday supervisor
- 2 Governors
- 3 parents
- 6 students

This updated Accessibility Plan has been reviewed by the Leadership Team and been put out to consultation to all staff and Governors. Invitations were also passed onto parents to contribute to the review process via the school newsletter.

The school also engaged with an independent consultancy which audits access arrangements for public buildings. Their recommendations are presented in Appendix A and have been used to inform our school access priorities as identified in Section 3.

3. ACCESS PRIORITIES AS IDENTIFIED BY THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

3.1 Increasing the extent to which all pupils can participate in the school curriculum

| Issue | Possible Solutions | Action |
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| Ensure trips and activities are accessible to students with physical disabilities. | Review clubs, trips and activities to ensure that all curriculum activities are fully accessible and that, where possible, extra-curricular events are adaptable for students with physical disabilities. | Leadership Team in partnership with LLD faculty to review access to curriculum and enrichment activities. |
| Queuing e.g. for lunch can be difficult for some students. This works well consistently but needs to remain within the Access Plan as a possible difficulty. Occasional difficulties with “buddies” being permitted. | Maintain a fast tracking system for students with medical needs/physical difficulties. Buddying and pairing arrangements regularly communicated to Middy Supervisors/Catering Staff/LT | Buddying students in place for students with temporary mobility issues and LSAs deployed where students have longer term access needs. |
| Student groupings. This works well consistently and is well embedded in teaching and lesson planning but needs to remain within the Access Plan as a possible difficulty. | Review seating plans & grouping policy. Regular termly reminders for regrouping. Seating plans to HOFs and available for lesson observations. | All staff to review seating plans regularly. |
| Ensure there is a regular review of comfortable places for students to socialise at break and lunch time. | There are a number of well equipped, shared spaces with good quality, comfortable seating available for all year groups. There are several student lounge areas. Dining and patio areas are well equipped and form rooms are now available for all tutor groups at break and lunchtimes. Garden areas are well equipped with good quality picnic benches available to all students. | Business Manager and Assistant Head i/c Pastoral to review spaces and usage regularly. |
| Travelling to and from, and accessing off-site provision and trips. | Transport arrangements to be made as appropriate. | Heads of Faculties or trip leaders to ensure adequate transport provision is made. |

3.2 Improving the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which all pupils can take advantage of education

| Issue | Possible Solutions | Action |
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| Ensure access to all relevant parts of the school's facilities to enable participation in the full curriculum and enrichment activities. | Ramps/Lifts regularly inspected and system of reporting faults identified. Complete training for staff and students with keys made accessible to appropriate staff members. | Business Manager to ensure lift inspections carried out and ramps maintained. |
| Adapt doors to facilitate the smooth movement of people around the site during busy periods. | Replacement of doors/doors re-hung/modified for easy operation. Locate handles lower down/replace handles with improved grip ones. | Premises Manager to audit condition and operation of all doors. |
| Ensure all paths allow easy access to all parts of the external grounds. | Ensure damage to the paths are reported through the Premises Team. | Premises Manager to ensure paths are regularly maintained. |
| Access toilets are accessible at all times. | Accessible toilets and the hygiene room are routinely unlocked on a daily basis and available for use by staff/students/visitors as appropriate. | Premises Team to ensure toilets are unlocked and checked regularly. |
| Equipment in the Therapy Room W14 not yet provided for physiotherapy intervention. | Ensure a continuing commitment to provision of equipment as the need arises. | Leadership Team to review as need arises. |
| Two out of three one-to-one spaces not available for use due to shortage of office spaces. This makes it difficult to do one-to-one work with students. | Review use of one-to-one spaces and the School Lodge. | Leadership Team to review. |
| Adjustable height desks are provided if necessary. | Commitment to install desks as the need arises. | Business Manager to procure when required. |

3.3 Improving the delivery of information to all pupils.

| Issue | Possible Solutions | Action |
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| Clear signage across the school. | Improve signage at front door. Larger print signs. | Business Manager to seek advice from Accessibility Auditor. |
| Improve acoustics in certain parts of the school. | Ensure surround sound systems are working correctly in halls and use portable hearing loop if necessary. | ICT Support to check sound systems regularly. |
| Parents with literacy difficulties or visual impairments find it difficult to access home-school communication. | Ensure that all key documents are available in large print and braille or audio formats as appropriate to meet individual needs. Ensure that staff are available to explain letters/documents to parents. Enquire at transition interview whether parents require the above services. Review of the Greensheet and website with LLD consultation. Encourage parents to access the MLE. | Admin Support as per individual request. All appropriate staff. Assistant Head i/c Pastoral and SPL (Year 7). Leadership Team. |

3.4 Improving the understanding of and attitudes towards members of the school community with access needs

| Issue | Possible Solutions | Action |
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| Need to raise awareness around a number of issues, Behavioural, Emotional, Social Difficulties (BESD), language and communication, sensory, medical and physical. | Raise awareness through posters, assemblies, speakers and training for staff and students. | To be incorporated in PSHE lessons with LLD Faculty support. |
| Need for understanding about the level of independence that all students should have. | Raise awareness through posters, assemblies, speakers and training for staff and students. | To be incorporated in PSHE lessons with LLD Faculty support. |
| Need for awareness of policies and procedures relating to long term health conditions such as; asthma, epilepsy, HIV:Aids and Anaphylaxis. Need for Year 7 induction to raise awareness of issues and access needs of other Students in the school. | Training for staff including supply teachers on basic procedures. Development of school policy on health conditions. Build into Year 7 transition process/induction period. | Business Manager to seek advice from School Nurse and Senior First Aider. Assistant Head i/c pastoral and SPL (Year 7). |

4. MANAGEMENT, COORDINATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This Accessibility Plan builds upon the previous Disability Equality Scheme (DES). The Accessibility Plan incorporates the amendments from the Equality Act 2010 and has reviewed the previous DES which was considered good practice. Due to the thoroughness of the previous DES it was not required to reform a working group but to make the necessary amendments in line with legislation changes and put out the updated Accessibility Plan for consultation and review.

The Headteacher and Business Manager will take overall responsibility for ensuring that the priorities identified at the review are progressed and regular reviews with stakeholders will take place on a three yearly cycle.

The school's Accessibility Plan is available in the staff shared area – Staff Central Resources. It is also available on the school website and as a paper copy, free of charge, to any parent or member of the community or wider public who requests it, via the school office. The plan can be produced in a larger print version on request. It is also available on the school's Managed Learning Environment (MLE) in the Staff Handbook section.

APPENDIX A

Independent Accessibility Audit of the Physical Site

| Details / Issue | Recommendation | Action Taken |
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| <p>There are no bays marked out in accordance with BS8300.</p> | <p>The designated accessible parking should be clearly marked out with bays at least 2.4m wide x 4.8m long plus a 1.2m side transfer zone at the side and end of the bay.</p> | <p>School is looking at marking out some disabled bays in the visitors' car parking area.</p> |
| <p>Main Reception - The double doors have an opening clearance width of less than 800mm when a single door is opened however this building is Grade 2 Listed so they cannot be replaced.</p> | <p>Due to the level of usage it is strongly recommended that the Main Reception doors are power-operated controlled by a push pad or an automatically activated door controlled by a motion sensor.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any Reception refurbishment project.</p> |
| <p>Accessible shower facilities - There is no international wheelchair signage on the door. The toilet pan has no back support. There is no pull cord alarm provided for shower and toilet pan.</p> | <p>Install well contrasted International Wheelchair Symbol signage.</p> <p>Install backrest to the toilet pan.</p> <p>Install an emergency alarm system.</p> <p>Install two triangular bangles.</p> | <p>Sign to be fitted and feasibility of integrating new push cord alarm with existing system to be investigated.</p> |
| <p>1900 Building and 1970 Building - Numerous fire exits do not have sufficient clearance width, the thresholds are not level with the floor and do not have ramps making egress potentially difficult for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Some fire exit doors do not have push to open bar, causing problems for wheelchair users and those with dexterity impairments.</p> | <p>Install 'humps' / graded approaches to the fire exits which would allow egress for wheelchair users.</p> <p>The gradients should be colour contrasted to indicate the presence of a gradient. This will ensure people do not stumble.</p> <p>Site management should review the situation and implement a management procedure to ensure that a clearance width is available at all times.</p> <p>Push bar should be installed to fire exit and clear signage added indicating the position of the push bar.</p> | <p>The only exit which is not listed has been adapted to incorporate a ramp to assist access to the House and 1970's block.</p> |

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| <p>Near F01, F38 and F45 - There is no refuge area.</p> | <p>Install refuge area to every site.</p> | <p>These have now been installed with appropriate signage near F01. The Fire Officer has advised the space is not sufficient to create refuge areas near F38 and F45.</p> |
| <p>The paths and one of the steps have overhanging tree branches which are a collision hazard for those with impaired vision because they may not be able to detect the hazard with their assistance cane.</p> | <p>Implement a management procedure to ensure that vegetation is appropriately trimmed back. Where the hazard is outside of the school's responsibility, liaison should be undertaken with the Local Authority.</p> | <p>Trees have been trimmed back and this is now part of the regular maintenance programme.</p> |
| <p>Staff Car Parking Area - There are no marked routes provided, which are of particular importance to people with hearing impairments who may not hear a car reversing.</p> | <p>Mark out 1200mm wide hatched pedestrian routes within the car park, complete with signage warning of pedestrians. Also recommend providing a maximum speed limit of 5 mph within the car parks.</p> | <p>This is under review as part of our staff car parking strategy.</p> |
| <p>1970's Building, Staircases near F38 and F45 - There is a handrail on only one side. The handrail does extend 300mm beyond the first and last steps.</p> <p>1900's Building - The main staircases are part of the Grade 2 Listed Building, therefore no action is required; however a handrail on the other side could be installed.</p> <p>1900's / 1970's Buildings - There are handrails to both sides but they are not of a suitable oval profile. The handrails do not extend 300mm beyond the first and last steps.</p> <p>Hall and 1900's Building all small steps - there are no handrails provided.</p> <p>The lodge - the white handrails do not have suitable colour contrast against the white/cream walls to aid people with impaired vision. The handrails are not of a suitable oval profile. The missing handrail in front of the window could cause stumbling for someone with impaired vision who thought this was the last step.</p> | <p>BS8300 compliant handrails should be installed. The handrail needs to extend at least 300mm beyond the top and the bottom of the steps and should not project into a route of travel.</p> <p>Ensure that they are well contrasted.</p> <p>The handrail needs to be a suitable profile (circular: 40–45mm, oval 50mm, in diameter) that projects at least 60-75mm clear of the adjacent wall – 50mm between a cranked support and the underside of the handrail.</p> | <p>This has been investigated and the only feasible method of installing a handrail is to fix it to the stairs. This will mean the already narrow staircase would be narrowed by a further 30-45 cm which is not practical due to the congestion already experienced on these staircases.</p> |

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| <p>All accessible WCs do not have a back support.</p> | <p>Install backrest to the toilet pans.</p> | <p>To be installed as part of summer 2014 works.</p> |
| <p>There is fixed seating in the dining room however there are no seats with armrests to aid people with ambulant disabilities.</p> | <p>Provide a mixture of chairs, varying in height, some with and some without armrests.</p> | <p>This will need to be reviewed, currently our student wheelchair user finds it easier to use her wheelchair as a means of seating.</p> |
| <p>Computer facilities are provided throughout the school. It was noticed that there are no height adjustable tables provided for wheelchair users or people of small stature.</p> | <p>Site management to review; height adjustable tables should ideally be purchased and installed for wheelchair users or people of small stature who may need to use the computing facilities.</p> | <p>We will procure height adjustable tables as the need arises.</p> |
| <p>One of the Walthamstow School for Girls main signs is in uppercase, which is not the preferred format.</p> | <p>Complete review of way finding signage required. Words entirely in uppercase should be avoided. A sans serif type face with a relatively large “capital” height to “x” height should be used.</p> <p>Symbols should also be used to compliment signage where possible. Refer to - JMU Access Partnership and The Sign Design Society. 2000. ISBN 185878 412 3. Seek specialist advice for tactile signage.</p> | <p>We will take this advice for our next update of school signs.</p> |
| <p>There is no seating provided between the main site entrance and the main reception entrance to provide people with ambulant disabilities a short rest before entering the school.</p> | <p>Provide benches with armrests at equal intervals. Ensure benches are well contrasted against their surroundings and that there is space to the side which will allow a wheelchair user to be alongside a seated companion.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any Reception refurbishment project.</p> |
| <p>Student Entrance and Playing Area Entrance - The grey doors are not clearly seen on approach owing to a lack of colour contrast against the grey facade.</p> | <p>At the next refurbishment for the site, colour contrast should be added to the entrance doors to ensure they are clearly seen by people with impaired vision on approach.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any future refurbishment programme.</p> |
| <p>A number of doors have an opening pressure that exceeds 30 Newtons of force, making it very difficult for many people to open them.</p> | <p>Implement a management procedure to ensure all door ironmongery is maintained on a regular basis and to check door opening pressures do not exceed 30 Newtons as recommended in the BS8300.</p> | <p>The Site Team now make regular checks on doors to ensure ironmongery is functioning correctly.</p> |

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| <p>Main Reception - The desk is at approx. 750mm high, this should have a lower section plus sufficient knee space both sides for people sitting or standing. Ideally this should be at two heights: between 950mm and 1100mm to accommodate people standing and at 760mm for wheelchair users and be clear of furniture below.</p> | <p>Replace the reception desk at the next refurbishment. BS8300 criteria will be satisfied if at least one section of the counter is at least 1500mm wide, with its surface no higher than 760mm.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any Reception refurbishment project.</p> |
| <p>The use of black vinyl style flooring produces a glare. When a floor is glossy or produces a glare it can make people with impaired vision apprehensive as it can appear to be a wet surface.</p> | <p>At the next planned renovation/re-decoration liaison should be undertaken with the RNIB to ensure a well-designed colour scheme adding contrast to floors, skirting and walls, which would substantially aid people with impaired vision to navigate around the school.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any future refurbishment programme.</p> |
| <p>1900's and 1970's Buildings - There are a considerable number of single and double doors throughout which have an opening clearance width of less than 800mm when a single door is opened.</p> | <p>Remove existing doors and install a new door and a half system to allow a wider opening through the master leaf.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any future refurbishment programme.</p> |
| <p>Both lifts - There is LED display floor level indicator inside the lift however there is no LED display outside the lift provided to aid those with impaired hearing.</p> | <p>Liaison should be undertaken with the lift manufacturer to assess the possibility of installing an external level indicator.</p> | <p>We will take this advice to the lift manufacturers and see if it is feasible.</p> |
| <p>No minicom is provided for people with hearing impairments. People with impaired hearing ringing in would have to rely on a not generally preferred relay service such as BT TYPETALK.</p> | <p>Provide a minicom to the reception desk; ensure staff are trained in how to use the facility. Ensure that the direct line is advertised in relevant literature and on the internet.</p> | <p>This will be considered as part of any Reception refurbishment project.</p> |
| <p>For a school of this size, a tactile map would be beneficial.</p> | <p>Install a tactile way finding map which has embossed letters and routes. Braille should be included to the directory and consider including audio features.</p> | <p>We will investigate the feasibility of this and implement if affordable.</p> |

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Throughout the site the light switches are the same colour as the walls and positioned too high off the finished floor level for wheelchair users or people of small stature.

Light switches should be lowered to within a range of 750mm and 1200mm above finished floor level. All switches and controls should be operational without the use of both hands and have front plates that contrast visually with the surround.

This should be incorporated at the next electrical rewire for the site, with the exception of specific areas, where a wheelchair user or person of small stature may be employed.

This will be considered as part of any future refurbishment programme.