



# Warwickshire County Council's **SCHOOLS' ACCESS STRATEGY**

---

In Support of  
Learning



Warwickshire  
Education Services



*Working for  
Warwickshire*

# 1. Introduction

---

Local Authorities have a democratic mandate to 'champion' the interests of their local communities and ensure that services work effectively for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Regardless of whether learners attend local authority maintained schools and settings, academies, free schools or independent specialist settings, we are committed to proactively promoting inclusion, to ensure that high quality provision is provided as close to a learner's home as possible.

We believe that schools are best placed to meet the needs of learners and therefore budgets and decision-making will, wherever practical, be delegated to support earlier intervention and a swifter response to needs.

This strategy is written in accordance with the LA's duty under equality legislation to prepare an accessibility strategy, describing how the LA will work with schools to:

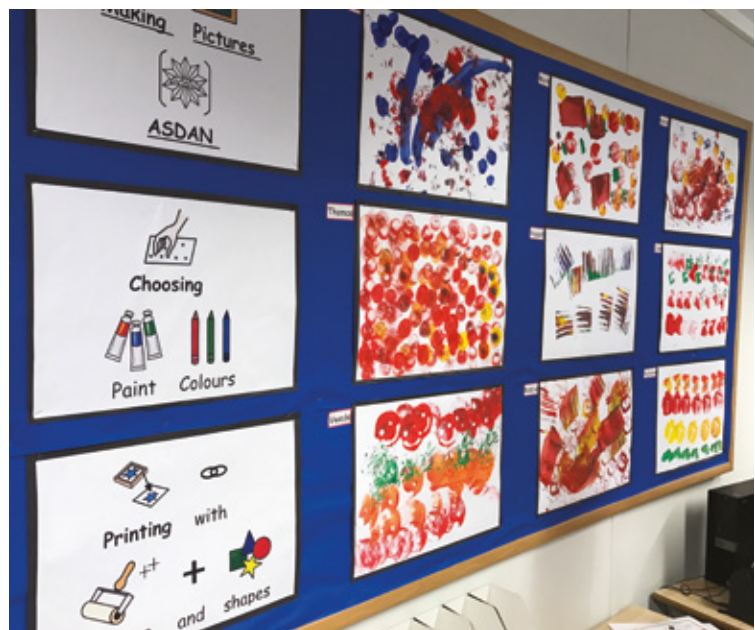
- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- Improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils;
- Improve the physical environment of schools.

## 2. Improving access to the curriculum and to information

---

Many reasonable adjustments to enable disabled learners to access the curriculum and information, are either low cost or even no cost. Through the WCC's Countywide licence all Early Years' Settings, Schools and professionals working with learners with SEND can have access to InPrint 3, software to generate Widgit symbols for free. Staff requiring advice or training on symbol use and alternative formats should speak with any member of the Integrated Disability Service 01926 413737 or email [sip@widgit.com](mailto:sip@widgit.com)

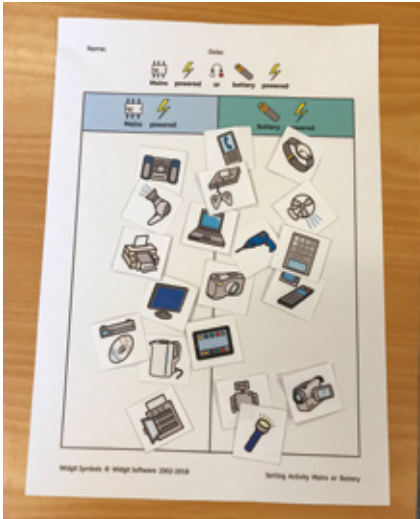
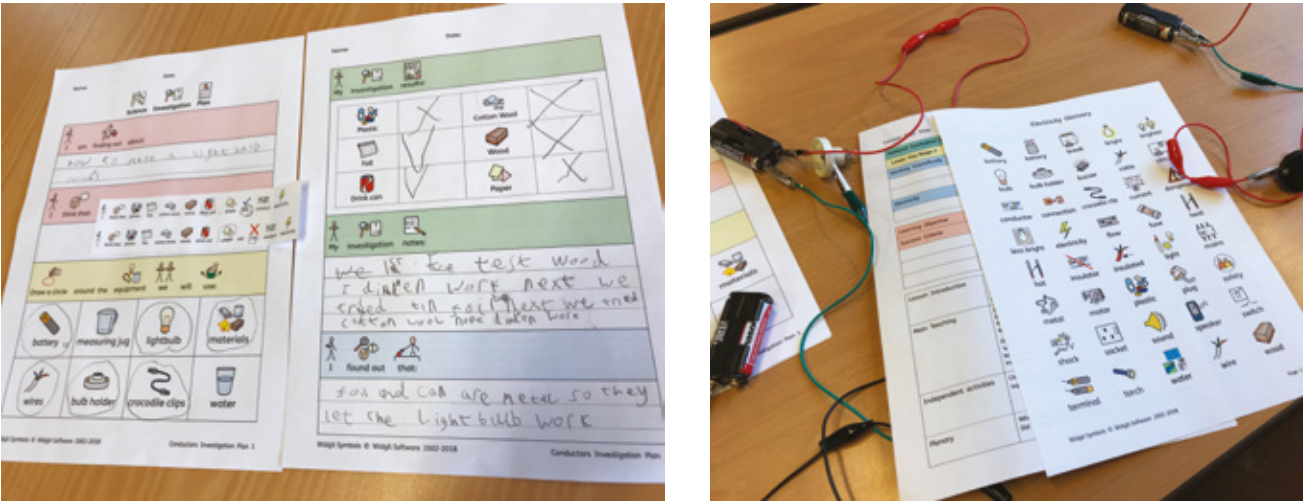
Through the Symbol Inclusion Project, a partnership between WCC and Widgit, professionals working in Warwickshire's schools and settings can access hundreds of ready-made curriculum and environmental resources and signs: <http://symbolsinclusionproject.org/>



The Integrated Disability Service regularly runs Makaton training, for more information please ring 01926 413737 or consult the WES Training pages for course details:  
<https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/Wes/>

For advice on Braille and other specialist resources and equipment related to a visual impairment, schools should contact the Vision Support Service on 024 76 364200. This service is provided for the Local Authority by Exhall Grange School.

For advice on Audiology, specialist equipment, resources and adaptations related to hearing loss, schools should contact the Hearing Advisory Team within the Integrated Disability Service on 01926 413777.



Further information and advice is available from:  
<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schoolsdisabilityequality>



# 3. The role of the Disability Access Group

---

Warwickshire's Schools' Access Strategy is overseen by the Disability Access Group.

## Disability Access Group Terms of Reference

The Disability Access Group meets bi-monthly to oversee Schools' Access adaptations in mainstream school settings.

### Membership

**Resources:** Strategic Asset Manager  
Section Leader / Senior Building Surveyor Representation

**IDS:** Disability & Professional Practice Manager (Chair)  
Operations Manager, Physical Disability (OT)  
Specialist Teacher & Inclusion Assistant representation from the PD Team and Pre School Teams  
Educational Audiologist

**cc** Lead for Vision Support Service

### The Disability Access Group seeks to:

- Promote disability equality and inclusion by supporting schools to increase access over time.
- Set strategy for allocating funding to achieve best value.
- Advise the LA on implementing the Equality Act and other relevant legislation within educational settings.
- Identify and determine priorities.
- Approve funding for individual schemes up to £100,000.
- Recommend to Capital Access & Organisation Board expenditure on projects above £100,000.
- Report to Capital Access and Organisation Board.
- Establish best practice in design through:
  - Understanding the needs of the child / young person and school;
  - Working in partnership with South Warwickshire Foundation Trust professionals;
  - Incorporating health and safety requirements;
  - Providing possible building options;
  - Gathering customer feedback.

- Monitor spending.
- Improve access over time across nursery, primary and secondary phases in local mainstream schools by
  - Improving physical access to the school. This may include setting down and pick up points, ramps, handrails, lifts, as well as improvements to escape provisions. It may also include provision of a hygiene room, hoists, sole use facilities, accessible PE changing rooms.
  - Improving physical movement around the building and site, including adaptations for sensory disabilities such as improved colour schemes, and including access to social areas, playgrounds, dining rooms etc.
  - Improving access to the National Curriculum through specialist furniture and equipment such as postural seating, high low changing bed, rise and fall tables, benches, sinks and ovens, and where appropriate, highly specialised ICT e.g. eye gaze technology.
  - Improving acoustic access for pupils with hearing loss, which may include reducing background noise, fitting carpets and ceiling tiles, controlling glare, fitting Soundfield technology.
  - Reducing home to school travel time for pupils by making a local school accessible.



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

## 4. The role of Schools in increasing access

---

All Schools, including Academies, have a statutory responsibility to have an Accessibility Plan, showing how they are planning strategically to increase access over time; this duty has been in place since 2003. This should be available via the school website and may be scrutinised by Ofsted. The plan must show how the school is

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- Improving the physical environment of schools to enable those with disabilities to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- Improving the availability of accessible information to those with disabilities.

Schools are expected to provide adequate resources for implementing their plans and must review them regularly. Advice on access planning, including a model plan is available on <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/schoolsdisabilityequality>

The Council has set a 'de minimis' level of £3,000 for primary schools and £6,000 for secondary schools before an amount can be charged to capital. Any adaptations below these levels will need to be funded from a school's own revenue budget.

Schools are expected to fund the following from their own resources:

- Disabled access to the main entrance and public areas of the site;
- At least one accessible toilet for visitors, parents, staff, pupils with disabilities;
- Age appropriate changing facilities for those who are not yet toilet trained in Foundation / Key Stage 1;
- Allocated accessible parking;
- ICT for differentiated recording e.g. a personal laptop or tablet;
- "Evac" style chairs for emergency access;
- Ongoing improvements to signage and highlighting of steps, changes of level etc.
- Ongoing servicing and maintenance of specialist equipment, for example, lifting equipment in accordance with LOLER (Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment

The LA will want to see a school's current Access Plan with evidence of investment of capital resources over time to improve access, before agreeing to fund major adaptations for individual named pupils.

Once the LA has funded an adaptation, its upkeep and maintenance is then the school's responsibility. If a pupil moves and the school no longer needs a particular facility (e.g. a hygiene room, a low arousal room) the Governing Body must consult the LA about any change. If subsequently the facility is needed again, this will then be the financial responsibility of the Governing Body. Maintained Schools are reminded that any removal or remodelling would require Landlord's consent.

## 5. Adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools

---

Most, but not all adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools are funded from the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) which provides funding at 90% of the cost; the final 10% falls to the Governing Body of the school or to the relevant Church Authority.

Current practice is that the Governors' 10% is met by WCC; this equates to £20-£30,000 in any year.

It is recommended that this practice continues.

## 6. Adaptations in Academies

---

Academy Schools are independent of the LA and are funded directly by Central Government.

LAs receive no funding for adaptation, improvement or alteration at Academy Schools but may use Basic Need Allocations to increase the number of places at Academy Schools where to do so would meet the LA's strategic needs.

In terms of Access for pupils with Additional Needs, Academies are required to publish a statement and plan "over time" to increase access to their school.

Advice from EFA is that LAs should discuss the placement of a pupil with additional needs with an Academy prior to the issue of an Education, Health & Care Plan and that the issue of costs and funding should form part of that discussion. The Academy may decline a placement where it cannot afford to make the necessary adaptations.

It follows that the LA must either

- (i) Offer the pupil an alternative, a Non-Academy place, or
- (ii) Fund the works required.

It is therefore proposed that:

1. All academies will be asked to provide copies of their Accessibility Plans and improvement plans.
2. Improvement plans will be expected to show a timeline for the adaptations identified.
3. There will be a presumption against naming an Academy unless and until discussions have taken place with that establishment about its capacity to accommodate the needs of the relevant pupil.
4. Where Academies are unable to meet the estimated cost of adaptation, the Authority will seek to co-fund or contribute.
5. Where no agreement can be reached the Authority will seek alternative provision for the pupil.

An Academy's ability to contribute will vary and it is therefore proposed that the size of contribution is proportionate to the size of school.



## 7. Access in New Buildings

---

Where there is a new build, it is expected that schools will incorporate any access facilities needed for existing pupils, as well as, in accordance with its statutory responsibilities, anticipate the needs of future pupils; the Integrated Disability Service will be happy to assist with this planning.

It is anticipated that all new builds should have hygiene rooms with the capacity to incorporate a height adjustable changing bed and a ceiling track hoist.



Accessible toilets should be in a peninsular layout, enabling wheelchair transfer from either side and ensuring safer manual handling by staff, rather than placing the toilet in the corner of the available space.

## 8. Roles and responsibilities of Integrated Disability Service Teaching & Learning

---

Where complex adaptations are required, planning will begin at least 12 months ahead of transition. IDS is reliant, however, on schools and settings alerting the Service.

- In November the Physical Disability Team will gather information from IDS Pre-school and school age teams, Physios and OTs for details of any pupils starting school or changing schools the following September, who will require adaptations, including acoustic improvements.
- IDS will liaise with Admissions to find out best guess destination to aid early planning.
- IDS Educational Audiologist to carry out acoustic testing of classrooms and advise Physical Assets on possible adaptations.
- IDS staff will gather information on the child's individual needs, liaise with other professionals involved, take into consideration any manual handling / personal care requirements and advise on any specialist equipment needed. They will also help ascertain the views of the child and the family.
- IDS staff will provide written details of their recommendations and the child's needs to the Physical Assets' Team using the "Request for Advice Regarding Adaptations form in relation to the Equality Act".
- For more complex and costly works there will need to be a meeting on site with all parties present e.g. IDS (Pre-school / School age teams), OT, Physio, School representatives, Physical Assets, relevant Project Manager.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities of Physical Assets

---

- To advise Education & Learning on the suitability for adaptation of selected schools.
- To carry out an options appraisal to identify the most suitable location.
- To devise, from information provided by IDS, a suitable scheme to meet the needs of the pupil.
- To agree specifications, layouts and programmes with IDS.
- To obtain all necessary permissions (planning, building regulations etc).
- To procure and supervise the works.
- To manage the costs within the available budgets.
- To manage the programme within the available budget.

With regard to Academy Schools in addition to the above:

- To advise on the efficacy of proposed action plans in meeting needs over time.
- To act as client officer where works are carried out directly by an Academy school.



In Support of  
Learning



Warwickshire  
Education Services



Warwickshire  
County Council

*Working for  
Warwickshire*