

Disability Access Group Terms of Reference

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

Membership

Resources: John Harmon, Asset Strategy Manager
Julie Williams, Building Development Support Officer
David Jacobs, Senior Construction Cost Manger
Danny Evans, Section Leader

IDS: Jane Carter, Service Development Manager, Head of Teaching & Learning
Lesley Chaplin, Operations Manager, Physical Disability
Sarah Osborne, Specialist PD Teacher
Jo Cumberland, Inclusion Assistant, PD Team
Sarah Haddon, Specialist PD Teacher

cc Ann Robey, Lead Consultant Teacher for Hearing Team
cc Lead for VSS

The Disability Access Group will seek 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 the Head of Service, Education & Learning and the Head of Service, Physical Assets, expenditure on projects above £100,000.
- Report to Capital Access and Organisation Committee.
- 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 should contribute to the Local Authority's overall strategy for increasing access and inclusion for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

The role of Schools in increasing access

All Schools, including Academies, have a statutory responsibility to have an Access 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.

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.

The LA does not receive any particular or enhanced funding to meet the cost of adaptations for pupils with Additional Needs.

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.

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 a statement 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 Access Statements 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.

Where there is a new build, it is expected that the Academy 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.

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 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.

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.