

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. The DDA (2005) placed a duty on all public sector authorities including schools to be proactive in promoting disability equality by removing environmental, organisational and attitudinal barriers to achievement. This earlier legislation has now been incorporated into the Single Equality Act (2010).

As a result, the Governing Body are required to:

- promote equality of opportunity
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- assess and monitor the impact of the school's activities on disabled people
- make reasonable adjustments for disabled students, so that they are not disadvantaged
- to improve outcome for disabled people.

In addition, the legislation seeks to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- eliminate harassment of those with a disability
- encourage participation by disabled individuals
- take steps to take account of disabilities even if this involves treating disabled persons more favourably than their non-disabled peers.

This Disability Equality Scheme sets out the ways in which the **White Hills Park Federation** will meet its general and specific duties as required by legislation.

The Scheme and Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with other relevant Federation policies.

We will therefore address other equality issues such as ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief.

Our mission statement is “A Federation for Every Future” which encompasses three aims.

- Every student's future is important to us, we will ensure that their potential will be reached and their needs will be catered for.
- We recognise that we live in a rapidly changing world, where those who can adapt, both as individuals and as communities, will be successful. The Federation will be flexible in order that we lead change as well as reap the benefits which the future will bring. We will also ensure that our students face the future with confidence.
- We recognise that change brings opportunity and we will seek continual improvement in the work of the Federation and in the expectations that we have of our students.

1A: The purpose and direction of the Federation's plan: vision and values

The Federation's strategic aims for 2011-2014 are that:

By working and learning together, we want our community:

- ✓ *To realise the highest standards of achievement*
- ✓ *To be an inclusive Federation*
- ✓ *To meet the challenges of the future.*

Equality of opportunity in the **White Hills Park Federation** is about providing equal access and excellence for all members of the community, in order to promote the highest possible standards of achievement.

The philosophy of White Hills Park Federation is based on inclusive principles which strive to actively promote equality. It embraces the following core values:

- to develop all students as responsible citizens, each in their own right
- to give each student an equal opportunity to fulfil their own potential, personally, socially and academically, within a rewarding and stimulating environment
- to provide all students with a broad, balanced and relevant education, which will enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for lifelong learning and to adapt to a fast-changing world
- To develop an enterprising culture for our learning community.

In addition, the statutory inclusion statement in the *National Curriculum for England* describes schools' responsibility to provide a curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of students. It sets out three principles that are essential for teachers and schools to follow when developing an inclusive curriculum:

- Setting suitable learning challenges
- Responding to students' diverse learning needs
- Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of students.

In order to achieve these aims, all members of our community must be able to access provision when they attend schools within the Federation. The values of respect and responsibility underpin our aims. All members of our community have a duty to respect the right of others and to take responsibility for removing barriers to learning for disabled students.

1B: Involving Disabled People

The Federation will continue to involve disabled people in the development of this scheme by:

- ✓ questionnaires to students, staff and outside professionals
- ✓ eliciting the views of disabled pupils, staff and members of the local community
- ✓ discussions at School Council meetings
- ✓ consulting parents, governors and other users of the schools

A disabled person can be defined as someone who has:

"a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

The definition includes a wide range of impairments, not only physical disabilities - such as Visual and Hearing impairment, Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, but also 'hidden' impairments such as dyslexia, autism, communication difficulties, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A range of medical conditions are deemed disabilities, including Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes, Severe Asthma, Cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy, Sickle Cell Anaemia and HIV, facial disfigurement, gross obesity, diagnosed eating disorders and many more.

There is, therefore, a significant overlap between those considered to have a disability and those who have special educational needs.

1C: Gathering Information

The Federation will continue to gather information to ensure that policies and practices meet the legal responsibilities of the Disability Equality Duty, and in order to inform subsequent schemes. It is important to acknowledge that disabled students, staff, parents and members of the wider community may not feel comfortable disclosing an impairment or health problem. It is vital that everyone understands that the information is being gathered in order to ensure that **appropriate adjustments** are made.

For further information refer to Access Plan of 2011 to 2014 which identifies short, medium and long-term strategies for improving access to provision:

Progress has already been made on many of these strategies, although further improvements can be made and are identified in the action plan.

The Federation has set the following priorities for the development of information and data to support the Accessibility Plan:

- Consultation with students and parents regarding educational opportunities available to those with disabilities
- Staff awareness raising and consultation
- The recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees.

1D Views of those consulted during the development of the plan

On the whole, students at schools within The Federation are happy with the opportunities provided. They feel well supported by the SEN and Inclusion teams and that the Teaching Assistant support in classes help them do better in their subjects. Most teachers have a good understanding of their difficulties and make appropriate adjustments in class to help them succeed. Students enjoy using the break time and lunchtime clubs as it gives them a place to go to meet their friends. They felt happy with the transition from primary school to secondary school and found the induction days in the Summer Term very helpful. Students were happy with the extra curricular provision and felt able to participate if they wished.

Some students with disabilities do sometimes feel isolated but know they can approach the staff at any time to help and support them. They also felt that the GCSE and Alternative Curriculum Provision options needed to be explained to them in more detail.

Some students felt that a lot of things are left until the last minute, for example letters that need to be returned or information about non-uniform days and trips.

Some parents felt that students may need more vocational training as they progress through the Federation and that the pressures of 8 or 9 GCSEs were quite considerable. In the past, some confusion was experienced with the option process and this has meant that students are following less than appropriate courses (in relation to their ability for example). Parents also felt that extra curricular activities need to be more widely published so they can encourage their children to participate. Parents also felt other students needed to be made more aware of disabilities as a whole, as lack of understanding can lead to bullying issues.

Highlighted areas for improvement included more practical activities for students, honest option discussions with parents only and publishing of extra curricular activities. Parents felt that the Federation provides a safe environment for their child to achieve and allows them to make their own decisions about the future. This is endorsed by the Keele Survey.

The Federation has set the following priorities in respect of consultation on the plan:

- To raise awareness and understanding of disability amongst members of the Federation community
- To support students in the transition between key stages 2 to 3, 3 to 4 and 4 to 5
- To improve awareness of extra-curricular activities available
- To re-assess at a future date progress on all the issues raised

2A: Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum

Currently the Federation is making significant progress in improving access to the curriculum. Effective differentiation is the subject of staff training sessions and will be ongoing. With the support of Teaching Assistants, the majority of departments are aware of the need to differentiate their teaching. Departments are beginning to use tools and approaches, such as coloured overlays and pale shaded paper for students with Dyslexia, to support individual needs. Close contact between staff and the Learning Support Department via Teaching Assistants has also facilitated far greater awareness of students' needs. Continued partnership with a variety of outside agencies and organisations has meant that the Federation can plan and adapt the curriculum to suit the requirements of all students.

The Federation has set the following overall priorities for increasing curriculum access:

- To identify SEN provision on schemes of work
- To monitor value added achievements of disabled students as compared to their non-disabled peers.

2B: Improving the physical environment of the Federation

The physical environment of the Federation caters for the needs of all but the most severely physically disabled individuals. Corridors are well lit and free of obstacles. Rooms are set out for ease of access and movement. Some ramps and handrails have been fitted. All new buildings comply fully with current legislation.

The Federation has set the following priorities for physical improvements to increase access:

- Greater consideration and reasonable adjustments to the physical environment of the Federation to increase access for disabled students and visitors
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2C: Improving the delivery to disabled students of information that is provided in writing for students who are not disabled

Further small adjustments will be made to ensure better access to written material:

- Comic Sans font is generally recommended as a matter of good practice
- The Federation website and network is simple and easy to access
- Most departments have pictorial clues and key words on display
- Colour coded timetables for students
- Work sheets are differentiated by content (simplified).

The Federation has set the following priorities for providing information for disabled students:

- To improve readability of information given to students
- To increase the availability of alternative formats (Braille, Audio, Signs & Symbols)
- To improve access to the Internet via Browsing software.

3A: Impact Assessment

The Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan will be formally adopted and regularly reviewed by the Governing Body.

Progress towards the targets in the Action Plan will be reviewed as part of the Federation's annual evaluation of its Improvement Plan. The review will be co-ordinated by the Executive Headteacher although other lead staff are identified in the plan.

The results of that evaluation will be reported to the Governing Body.

Evidence for the evaluation will include: actions taken; resources deployed; scrutiny of Federation communication systems; lesson observations; and a judgement of the impact on teaching and learning.

The DES/AP is fully consistent with the Federation's Inclusion policy and SEN legislation. It should also be applied consistently with the Federation's policies on:

- Admission
- Attendance
- Behaviour for Learning
- Bullying
- Child Protection
- Differentiation
- Equal Opportunities
- Health and Safety
- Teaching and Learning

The Federation is keen to ensure that none of its policies and practices disadvantage disabled people.

3B: Publication and dissemination of the Federation's Plan

The Federation makes its Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan available in the following ways:

- Publishing it on the Federation web-site
- Making it available in alternative formats on request