



**School Policy Statement
on
Disability Access Strategies**

Cedars School of Excellence

School Policy Statement on Disability Access Strategies

Planning to Improve Access to Education for Pupils with Disabilities

Introduction

This policy statement is designed to aid progress towards an inclusive school, which allows full access for all children, regardless of disability, and ensures the needs of parents and staff with disabilities are considered.

On behalf of the Board of Governors the Head teacher consulted with the following people in reviewing this policy update:

Mrs Elaine McKenzie-Smith: Member of the Board of Governors. Mrs McKenzie Smith is responsible for monitoring the financial implications of policy recommendations and ensuring access to any funding which may be necessary. Mrs McKenzie-Smith is also a qualified physiotherapist, and advised the group on aspects of physical disability.

Mrs Jennifer Offord: Member of the Board of Governors. Mrs Offord is responsible for the Health and Safety policy of the school. She is also the Depute Head teacher and a science teacher in the school, and advised the group on conflicts of interest between disability access and safety issues.

Mrs Rhian Jewell: Parent representative on the Board of Governors and a qualified Occupational Therapist. Mrs Jewell advised the Board on aspects of access, aids, and provision of access for those requiring to use mobility aids.

Mrs Sheila Robertson: Qualified teacher of children with a Hearing Impairment.

In addition to the above the Head teacher, Mrs Alison Speirs holds a Diploma in Special Educational Needs, is an experienced teacher of children with Additional Support Needs and has acted as an adviser to a local authority on the provision of support for children with a visual impairment. She was also an associate tutor

at Glasgow University, working in the Additional Support Department.

Legislation

The Head teacher reviewed and took cognisance of the current legislation and documents on Disability and Inclusion. They referred to the European Convention on Human Rights, 1950; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the Salamanca Agreement, 1994; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995; the Human Rights Act, 1998; the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000; Success for All, 2000; the Special Needs and Disability Act 2001; How Good is Our School, 2003; Report on the First Round of Accessibility Strategies 2003; the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 ; SCIS Handbook for Accessibility 2005: the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008); various Education Scotland Acts; other relevant publications, advice letters and internet sites.

Timescale

This Policy Statement reviews the 2nd document produced in May 2006 covering the period until April 2009 and plans for improvements until April 2012.

Review of Present Provision

Cedars School is an independent school with provision for 120 children aged from 5 to 17 years. It provides education from Primary 1 to Secondary 5. The school was founded in 1999, has final registration from the Scottish Office and is a member of the Scottish Council for Independent Schools. In 2004 the school moved premises to Ardgowan Square, Greenock.

Consultation and Observation

The Head teacher gathered evidence by consulting with pupils, staff, parents' representatives and other professionals. She also examined the premises, curriculum issues and methods of communication of information.

Rationale

The aims of Cedars School, as stated in the prospectus, emphasise that each child should be provided with an education that will satisfy his\her needs and develop them as fully as their capacity will allow. Furthermore it is stated that the school aims to provide an environment in which each child feels secure and sure of being understood, and that equal opportunities for all children to participate in all aspects of the curriculum and in every aspect of school life will be given throughout the years of education in this school. To meet the above aims each child must be provided with an education which caters for the needs specific to them.

In addition the Board of Governors took seriously a duty to make provision for the future, where needs may arise which are not a present reality. This is designed to ensure that disadvantage is not experienced by any pupil with a disability who may attend at a future date. The school also aims to make provision to meet the needs of parents and staff who have a disability.

Audit of Provision

The Head teacher carried out an audit of the provision of the school under 3 headings:

- improving access to the curriculum for disabled pupils
- improving physical access for disabled pupils, parents and staff
- improving communication with disabled pupils, parents and staff

Improving access to the curriculum for disabled pupils

There are four children who have some measure of disability which affects their full access to the curriculum, and some other pupils who have some minor disability which does not affect their access to the curriculum.

1 pupil has Attention Deficit Disorder

1 pupil has epilepsy

1 pupil has a hearing impairment

1 pupil has type 1 diabetes

In addition there are 2 pupils with allergic reactions which require to be

considered in certain circumstances.

The issues considered in drawing up an accessibility strategy for the curriculum were:

- distribution of learning support and auxiliary provision throughout the school
- provision of auxiliary aids for pupils with appropriate disabilities
- staff training
- alternative approaches for teaching and support
- sharing good practice
- collaboration with other schools and agencies
- integration of approach for pupils with multiple needs
- overcoming barriers to extra-curricular activities and in particular out of school activities
- accessibility to information and communication technology
- consideration of pupils with different types of disability
- consideration of implications for access to the curriculum by pupils who may join the school at a future point, who have disabilities that we have not experienced in the past.

Improving physical access for disabled pupils, parents and staff

Cedars School is a Victorian, detached, three storey building. The building is accessed by a flight of steps to the front but disabled access is available through 3 ramped, broad doors to the rear and side of the building. These doors are the main entry and exit doors for pupils. The school upgraded the playground and access doors to make it completely accessible for any pupil with a disability. The playground is flat and there are no steps into the playground. In 2005 the toilet accommodation was completely renewed, with the provision of a disabled toilet conforming to current legislation. The school has very broad corridors which allow wheelchair access throughout the ground floor.

In the audit of physical access cognisance was taken of the needs of those with **physical disability**, including:

- ramps
- handrails
- widened doorways
- automatic doors
- accessible toilets, showers and changing areas
- adapted furniture and equipment
- sufficient floor space for maneuvering wheelchairs
- floor coverings
- evacuation procedures and exits

In the audit of physical access cognisance was taken of the needs of those with visual **impairment** including:

- improved signage
- route finding systems
- colour contrasting
- adjustable lighting
- tactile paving
- evacuation procedures.

In the audit of physical access cognisance was taken of the needs of those with **hearing impairment** including;

- induction loops
- radio systems

- infra-red systems
- light signals
- sound insulation
- floor coverings
- evacuation procedures

In considering these areas of access the criteria were to allow access to the ground floor of the school and to all areas of school activities for all children, staff and parents regardless of disability. Consideration was given to the provision of facilities in other areas used by the school such as the sports centre, swimming pool, sites of school visits and centres used for residential visits.

Improving communication with disabled pupils, parents and staff

At present Cedars School presents information mainly in written form with the provision of differentiated text to meet learning support needs.

In the audit of this area the Head teacher has given consideration to the provision of information in “alternative formats”. Information usually provided in written format such as class handouts and worksheets, textbooks, timetables, handbooks, test and examination papers, posters, letters and information about school events may be provided:

- orally
- in audio format
- by sign language interpreter
- by lip speaking
- on DVD with subtitles or sign language
- in Braille
- in large print
- in “easy read” format

- on CD Roms or other electronic communication

Areas for Improvement - Review of Progress

In April 2009 we reviewed the commitments we had made for the 3 years of the previous policy. The progress we have made is as follows:

sharing good practice - Cedars School continued to network with other schools in the Scottish Council for Independent Schools to ensure good practice was observed.

collaboration with other schools and agencies - Cedars School continued to collaborate with schools in SCIS and with SCIS to ensure dissemination of information. Cedars School took cognisance of the information contained in the SCIS document "Handbook for Accessibility".

overcoming barriers to extra-curricular activities and in particular out of school activities - Cedars School continued to audit extra curricular activities to ensure there were no barriers to those with a disability. This was reviewed on any occasion on which a child with a disability was admitted to the school. The school asked to see the Disability Access Policy of every facility we used for extra-curricular activities or for residential visits.

consideration of implications for access to the curriculum of pupils who may join the school at a future point who have disabilities – a review of provision was carried out when we admitted children who had disability issues and also when children in the school developed conditions.

staff training - appropriate staff training has been given every year in the August in-service day as well as at a number of after school inputs. Information about pupils with a disability is emailed to all staff as appropriate.

evacuation procedures and exits for those with physical disability - the fire evacuation policy of the school has been reviewed to take account of the needs of those with a disability. This included the installation of visual fire alarm warning lights.

handrails - provision of a hand rail to exit from the General Purpose room, and close fitted hand rails have been installed in the stairway to the staff resource base.

lighting - replacement lighting which does not cause problems to those with epilepsy has been fitted to appropriate classrooms. Light signals which operate with the fire alarm were also installed.

approach to the building - the school has lowered the kerb at the access to the playground to ensure access for wheelchairs and access for the transport of those with a disability.

fire doors in corridors - these have been fitted with vision panels where appropriate.

alternative approaches for teaching and support - In-service days were used to address questions of access every year.

consideration of implication for access to the curriculum of pupils who may join the school at a future point who have disabilities that we have not experienced in the past – the Head teacher liaised with advisers, and where the skills or knowledge required were not available, liaised with the relevant authority.

Action Plan 2009 - 2012

We then reviewed the progress we had made as well as the existing strengths and the **areas for improvement to be addressed in future plans.**

Within the areas for improvement we decided on priorities for action and set out a 3 year plan to address these priorities.

Action Plan

The issues audited were divided into 5 sections:

- **Strengths**
- **Areas for improvement in Year 1**
- **Areas for improvement in Year 2**
- **Areas for improvement in Year 3**
- **Areas for improvement to be addressed if the need arises.**

Strengths

The following areas were identified as strengths within our provision:

- distribution of learning support and auxiliary provision throughout the school
- accessibility of information and communication technology
- consideration of pupils with different types of disability
- ramped access to all rear and side doors and lowered kerb
- wide corridors and doorways
- accessible toilets and changing areas
- dissemination of information and training on disability issues.
- fire safety and procedures
- provision of appropriate doors and rails
- liaison with other agencies

Areas for improvement in Year 1

- provision of a hand rail for the front entrance of the school
- development of a whole school plan to allow complete access to the curriculum for any child who has difficulty negotiating stairs
- to create a plan of provision for any pupil / member of staff who develops a difficulty negotiating stairs

Areas for improvement in Year 2

- consider installation of a lift

Areas for improvement in Year 3

- consider installation of automatic doors

Areas for improvement to be addressed if the need arises

In addition we will take cognisance of the following issues should we admit a pupil with relevant needs or should these needs develop within the current school population:

- adapted furniture and equipment
- route finding systems
- floor coverings
- colour contrasting
- tactile paving
- induction loops
- radio systems
- infra-red systems
- sound insulation

In the next 3 years we will also continue our ongoing programme of liaison, training and dissemination of disability access issues.

The Board of Governors will assess the success of this Disability Access Policy in January 2012 in order that it may be reviewed and the next phase implemented by April 2012.

In addition the advisers were asked to continue to be prepared for consultation immediately if a child or parent was identified as having a disability, in order that advice could be given to staff and measures could be put in place to meet the needs of the child within two weeks.