



LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON
LEARNING FOR LIFE

ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLS:

ACCESS STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

Local Education Authorities were required by April 2003 to have an Accessibility Strategy to increase access to schools for disabled pupils, running initially for three years until 31 March 2006. LEAs were required to consult all schools and local dioceses in preparing their strategy. Sutton LEA accordingly issued an Access Strategy in April 2003. This strategy was reviewed during the Autumn Term 2004. In accordance with the Inclusion and SEN Strategic Action Plan Priority 2a(i), this revision has been overseen by the Inclusion Planning Sub Group. The SEN Policy and Strategic Action Plan is based on the Government's strategy set out in 'Removing Barriers to Achievement', and so the Access Strategy can be viewed as a continuum of the above in ensuring that the needs of children with disability/special educational needs are met appropriately within the London Borough of Sutton.

2. DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The SEN and Disability Act (2001) clarified the legal duties in relation to the education of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. This legislation reinforces the statutory framework for inclusion by:

- strengthening the right of pupils with statements of special educational needs to mainstream education
- placing a new duty on LEAs to provide and advertise parent partnership services
- placing a new duty on LEAs to make arrangements for resolving disagreements between schools and LEAs
- placing a new duty on schools to inform parents when any SEN provision is made for their child
- tightening arrangements for Tribunal appeals

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 amended the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4 to prevent discrimination against disabled people in their access to education. In 2002, the Disability Rights Commission published a Code of Practice for Schools. That Code sets out two key duties for responsible bodies:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably
- To take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage (the 'reasonable adjustments' duty).

It is unlawful for a school to discriminate against a child on the grounds of his/her disability:

- In relation to admissions
- In relation to education and associated services
- Or by excluding a pupil.

4. PLANNING DUTY

The duty on schools is to anticipate access needs and to make reasonable adjustments . It is the potential for a substantial disadvantage that should trigger a consideration of what reasonable steps might need to be taken. The LEA must prepare an accessibility strategy and schools must prepare accessibility plans to address:

1. Improvements in access to the curriculum
2. Physical improvements to increase access to education and associated services
3. Improvements in the provision of information in a range of formats for disabled pupils.

5. OVERALL PRIORITIES

In developing the LEA access strategy we have identified the following priority areas for development:

Improvements in access to the curriculum

1. Continuing and Professional Development.
2. Developing a website.
3. Provision of attainment data to schools.
4. Information to schools on LEA Support Services.

Physical improvements to increase access to education and associated services

5. Implementing improvements to the physical environment – short term.
6. Implementing improvement works to the physical environment – long term future targets to be implemented following access audits.

7. Improving accountability.

Improvements in the provision of information in a range of formats for disabled children

8. Improving the quality of information available for planning through co-operation with Health and Social Services.
9. Providing specialist advice.
10. Information to be provided on the website.
11. Providing appropriate resources for children with sensory impairments.
12. Increasing the availability of information in different formats.
13. Increasing the opportunity for feedback on levels of satisfaction with provision made for disabled pupils.

ACTION PLAN

This revision of the Strategy encompasses an appended Action Plan with outcomes linked to the priority areas for development. To enable forward planning of capital expenditure, targets for Section Two: 'Improving the physical environment of schools', have been extended to March 2007. New targets for Sections One and Three will be prepared in the Autumn Term 2005, taking account of the priorities set out in the Children and Young People's Plan and the Inclusion and SEN Policy and Strategic Action Plan. The Access Strategy will be subject to further monitoring and revision by the LEA, overseen by the Inclusion Planning Sub Group.

Section One: Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the School Curriculum Plan for 1st April 2003 – 31st March 2006.

Sutton's plan to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum is designed to support schools in their responsibility for providing a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils including those with a disability.

This reflects the statutory requirements identified in the National Curriculum 2000 and clarifies that *schools have a responsibility to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils* and that *the National Curriculum is the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils*.

The statutory inclusion statement within the National Curriculum sets out three principles that are essential to developing a more inclusive curriculum:

- A. *Setting suitable learning challenges*
- B. *Responding to pupils' diverse learning needs*
- C. *Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.*

To assist schools in meeting their duties, the following four priority areas of development have been identified in relation to curriculum access:

1. Providing Continuing and Professional Development to support the understanding of the educational implications of different disabilities and the management of particular health needs in the classroom.
2. Developing a website to support inclusion of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.
3. Providing attainment data to schools in order to support monitoring of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.
4. Maintaining and developing information on LEA Support Services to schools.

Achievements:

- Service specifications have been published for all central teams involved with SEN
- Guidance to support the assessment of pupils for intervention at School Action Plus has been revised and sent out to all schools.
- Continuing and Professional Development Programme completed for 2003-04
- Attainment data related to SEN provided to schools Autumn 2003 and 2004.

Section Two: Improving the physical environment of school Plan for 1st April 2004 – 31st March 2007.

Achievements

- From 2001 to 2003, 4 schools received major access improvement works. The total cost of these works was £434k.
- In 2003/2004, 24 schools received works to provide an accessible entrance, and other priorities required for public access required under the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act). The total cost of these works was £516k. £50k was also allocated to school access improvement projects and a further £5.5 k spent on works for individual pupils.
- In 2004/2005, 24 schools have been programmed to receive works to provide an accessible entrance, and other priorities for public access required under the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act). The total cost of these works is £350k. £63k has also been allocated to school access improvement projects and £11k allocated for works for individual pupils.

Broad strategy for improving physical access

- To plan in advance for the immediate needs of current and future pupils, through consultation with schools and liaison between the Learning for Life Property Group and SEN team.
- To aim for all schools to have an accessible entrance, and other priorities required for public access required under the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act). **Agreed Work Programme to be completed by 1 September 2005.**
- When carrying out building works at schools, to improve access wherever practical.
- To widen the number of fully accessible schools by making more general improvements when it is required for an individual pupil.

- If there are spare resources, to make further access improvements, following audit information or requests from schools to be more inclusive.

Further access improvement will be prioritised according to:

- Number of pupils who would benefit
- Number of essential specialist areas to be made accessible
- Number of classrooms to be made accessible
- Cost i.e. in essence, the LEA will prioritise works to try to make the maximum impact with as little cost before expenditure is committed on more difficult buildings

Access information available

All Sutton maintained schools have received a full independent access audit. 52 Schools have also received a visit from Officers in Learning for Life Property Group to explain implications of the DDA in relation to physical access. The remaining 9 schools are planned for January. A guidance note on access works considered school responsibility has been sent to all schools. Information supplied from SEN will be used to plan in advance for the immediate needs of current and future pupils.

Information used to prioritise work

The access audit will be used to prioritise works, as well as information from SEN on future pupils, and general information on schools.

Paying for physical improvements - Equipment and minor works

When building works to improve access can be classed as capital, i.e. significant work, generally at least £2,000 in value that has general long term benefit, the LEA will provide financial support, subject to available resources.

Revenue works are the responsibility of the school, and cover good management practice to ensure the physical environment is suitable e.g. contrasting colours on steps, and clear signs.

Whilst the LEA will organise a planned programme for access improvements, some expenditure will be earmarked for school led priorities required throughout the year. Schools should contact the Authority as soon as possible, and certainly by the 31st October to receive financial support in that financial year. In line with the Asset Management Plan (AMP) policy statement, a 15% contribution is required from schools.

Works required for an individual pupil that do not have a long term benefit for the school: The LEA is still to resolve the exact responsibility for payment in these cases i.e. when payment should be made by the school, when it should be met by the LEA as part of the statement process, and when it should be met from general Access Initiative funds. This forms an area of development in this strategy.

Finance available to improve physical access

In 2005/06 £337k is available for community and foundation schools. There is a sum within the LEA coordinated Programme for VA schools. Some remaining expenditure from 2004/05 is also to be carried forward and be allocated. Money is not ring-fenced to education but to date the Council has passed on all the allocation.

Section Three: Improving information available Plan for 1st April 2003 – 31st March 2006.

In November 2002 we launched a comprehensive review of Sutton's SEN policy and provision. A major part of this exercise has been the collection of data to inform planning and provision of services. A revised Inclusion and SEN Policy and a five year Strategic Action Plan were agreed in December 2004 following consultation with schools and other partners.

The Authority is focusing on providing information about its central teams and support services in accessible formats, including development of the Sutton website, and obtaining feedback from users of services. Guidance is given to schools, libraries and other Council services about the provision of information for people with sensory impairments.

Priority areas identified for improving information

Co-ordinating information available for planning through co-operation between Learning for Life, Health and Social Services colleagues

Improving the information available to schools on central services from the LEA related to disability

Increasing the availability of information in different formats for parents and pupils

Increasing the opportunity for feedback to the LEA on levels of satisfaction with provision made for disabled pupils

Achievements

- Baseline planning data has been collected, in co-operation with Health and Social Services Colleagues. This has been presented to the Inclusion Planning Sub Group, which agreed to establish a working group in respect of pupils with social and communication difficulties. That working group has produced proposals for pre-school assessment and intervention and on provision for children with Autism Spectrum disorders aged 5-16 and is also currently exploring post 16 provision.
- Packs of leaflets about central SEN services within PPSS were sent to schools in September 2004. Services also produce Service Specifications which have been included as an appendix to the Inclusion and SEN Policy. Parents are already involved in service evaluations and this practice is being extended to included the SEN Team.

- Learning for Life staff and schools have been provided with ‘Providing information to the public in accessible formats’. Information is also given to schools when individuals with needs are identified and training is provided for learning support assistants. Equipment can be provided to schools to subtitle videos where necessary.

Specific areas of development are set out in the Accessible Schools Action Plan, which accompanies this Strategy.

GLOSSARY

<p>AMP = Asset Management Plan</p> <p>ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder</p> <p>CPD = Continuing Professional Development</p> <p>dB = decibels</p> <p>DDA = Disability Discrimination Act</p> <p>EDP = Education Development Plan</p> <p>EPS = Educational Psychology Service</p> <p>IPSG = Inclusion Planning Sub Group</p> <p>ISS = Integrated Support Services</p>	<p>IT = Information Technology</p> <p>LEA = Local Education Authority</p> <p>LfL = Learning for Life</p> <p>LSA = Learning Support Assistant</p> <p>N/A = Not applicable</p> <p>SEN = Special Educational Needs</p> <p>SI = Sensory Impairment</p> <p>SIP = School Improvement Plan</p> <p>VA = Voluntary Aided</p>
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