

Accessibility Plan 2017 - 2020

St Hilda's Church of England Primary School,
Firwood



Contents

Page

Page | 2

3	1. Introduction
3	2. Methodology
4	3. Accessibility Plan
4	4. What is Accessibility?
7	5. Summary of Recommendations
12	6. Access Survey
15	7. Conclusion
16	Appendix

1. Introduction

1.1 The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the basis of their protected characteristics. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination includes barring a person from a service or treating someone less favourably solely on the basis of their protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination includes creating unreasonable limits that, in practice, mean that a person is treated less favourably, for example insisting that a person has a GCSE English and refusing to recognise older qualifications could indirectly discriminate against older people.

1.2 All schools in Great Britain are required under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 to produce and regularly update an Accessibility Plan that covers the internal and external physical layout of the school; learning materials and written, and spoken and virtual communications in the school to all; as well as policies and procedures, with the aim to maximise opportunity for everyone to play an equal role in the life of the school

1.3 St Hilda's Church of England Primary School has an inclusive, community focused approach to learning, recognising its role in promoting acceptance of diversity in all its forms and providing a foundation for current and future community development.

1.4 St Hilda's is a community resource and it is necessary to apply the Equality Act robustly to ensure that all members of the community can access the facility according to their need, to bring about equality of opportunity.

1.5 The school is committed to provide an inclusive, barrier free space for all its users – pupils, staff, parents and carers, members of the community. This commitment is evidenced by ongoing improvement work to the school building and regular consultation with different community groups to ensure that the school's physical environment, its policies and procedures remain up to date and relevant within a rapidly changing community.

1.6 The school has taught a number of children with Education Health and Care Plan in place, some of whom have required physical alterations to the building. Some features of the building have recently been altered on the advice of Occupational Health specialists due to the enrolment of a student who uses a wheelchair.

1.7 Inclusion Inc. is an equality consultancy led by an NRAC accredited Access Consultant, and was approached by St Hilda's Church of England Primary School to draw up an up to date Accessibility Plan and review equality policies as part of their three-yearly review of documents.

1.8 This report forms part of the ongoing review process that is required to maintain an inclusive school.

2. Methodology

2.1 An access audit was conducted with the help of a pupil who uses a wheelchair. This took place on 16th January 2017. (The pupil's review of the process is attached as an appendix.)

2.2 A review of policies was undertaken.

2.3 Research on relevant up to date policies and best practice was undertaken.

2.4 Recommendations were drawn up as a result of these actions to form the Accessibility Plan detailed below.

3. Accessibility Plan

This plan

- Demonstrates the extent to which disabled people can currently access the school building
- Identifies improvements required to maximise access for disabled pupils, staff, parents, carers and members of the community currently and in future
- Highlights progress on previous targets for improving access to the learning and teaching environment, including learning materials
- Sets new targets to increase access to the learning and teaching environment
- Highlights the need to improve accessibility to written and spoken information about the school and the facilities
- Prioritises the changes and sets out a timetable to achieve them.

4. What is Accessibility?

4.1 Accessibility is defined as the quality of being easy to use or obtain, whether the service is building based or in the virtual realm or distance based, such as home based schooling. There are three main areas where there are access barriers that could prevent a wide range of people from being able to fully use the education service.

4.2 The nine strands of the Equality Act 2010 (known as 'protected characteristics') are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

4.3 The Equality Duty confers a duty onto all providers of public services to anticipate the requirements of people with a protected characteristic. Schools need to be proactive in the assessment of local demographic trends in order to anticipate likely need.

4.4 Environmental barriers

4.4.1 Environmental barriers are barriers that prevent people from using the physical space. This category includes facilities and features that many people take for granted that they will be able to use, such as entrances, emergency exits, fire alarms and toilets.

4.4.2 Whilst it is the case that many features in many public buildings are not designed with wheelchair users in mind, there are a number of other groups of people that are affected by this. Pushchair users for example, require larger corridors, easy to open doors and space to manoeuvre, just as wheelchair users do. This is particularly the case in a primary school, where there may be a greater number of pushchairs than in some other public spaces.

4.4.3 Some features which are designed to provide better access for wheelchair users are themselves problematic for people who experience other environmental barriers. If a main entrance is raised and accessible by steps, a ramp is essential to admit wheelchair users (and also extremely helpful to people with pushchairs, prams, and people using roller skates!) However, visually impaired people, people with reduced mobility who walk with mobility aids and people with false lower limbs find ramps difficult to traverse. Therefore, it is more accessible for these people to use a short flight of steps, as long as there are correctly situated handrails along each side.

4.4.4 Unisex accessible toilets were once considered useful provision just for disabled people, so that personal assistants of the opposite gender (such as a parent or partner) could assist a disabled person to use the toilet. Ungendered toilet facilities and changing rooms are now being provided to assist with meeting the requirements of gender fluid/transgendered people, as well as being useful to parents and carers who wish to accompany a child of the opposite gender.

4.5 Attitudinal Barriers

4.5.1 There are many ways other people's perceptions about disability may impact on a disabled person's ability to use a service on the same basis as a non-disabled person.

- Sometimes a disabled person has been refused access to an area because their presence is considered to be an additional fire hazard, due to perceived additional difficulties with evacuating wheelchair users from buildings in an emergency. This has been ruled to be unlawful.
- A deaf child may be perceived to be rude, when they are unresponsive due to not hearing.
- An autistic person may be perceived to be uncooperative, when they may not understand how they are expected to cooperate due to understanding spoken communications in a literal way.
- Distressed behaviour or involuntary movements may be mistaken for aggression.
- A person who is labelled disabled may be expected to do less well and therefore not offered the same educational opportunities as others. Children with dyslexia and dyspraxia may be dismissed as being lazy when they are actually trying much harder than their non-disabled counterparts.
- A child who does not speak English at home may not be recognised as having a specific learning difficulty because their difficulty with reading and writing may be misunderstood as being related to their lack of English skills, rather than an impairment.
- A wide spread perception that disabled people are 'broken' or incomplete, and require fixing, could adversely affect people's attitude towards an individual disabled person.
- Many schools enthusiastically embrace charity fundraising, often aimed at disabled people, and particularly people with certain types of impairment. However, some disabled people may find charity fundraising distasteful and inappropriate, and it can lead to unwanted

focus on impairment rather than disabling barriers, generating patronising comments and unwanted attention.

- There can be disablist bullying from other children, especially if a disabled person is often singled out for praise.
- It is a common issue that accessible toilets are viewed as convenient spaces to store cleaning and other equipment. It is also common to find that red alarm cords that hang down the side of accessible toilets are tied around grab rails, due to cleaning procedures. This creates the risk that the alarm is set off inadvertently when someone tries to use the grab rail, which in turn means that there are false alarms, so when a genuine alarm call is made it is more likely to be ignored.

4.5.2 These are issues which can and should be dealt with by robust and regular staff training that covers not only teaching staff but also other members of staff and volunteers at the school as well, to make sure that the attempts to improve accessibility at the school is not negated by a lack of general awareness.

4.6 Organisational barriers

4.6.1 Sometimes the way things are usually done can discriminate against disabled people. Many primary schools have had difficulties with controlling parking near to the entrance at dropping off time. It is appropriate to ask non-disabled parents to encourage their children to walk to school. It may not be appropriate to ask disabled parents to walk to school with their child.

4.6.2 An annual school trip may take place to an area that is not physically accessible to wheelchair users so a newly enrolled disabled pupil may be told they cannot attend.

4.6.3 At a school production, it may be that parents are expected to sit on small chairs designed for children. When a disabled carer wanting to see the production asks to be provided with more accessible seating, they may be refused due to fear that other parents may perceive this as 'favourable' treatment. A wheelchair user may be expected to transfer out of their chair due to a perception that their wheelchair might damage the hall floor. It should be noted that 'more favourable treatment' to remove the barriers that disabled people face is legal.

4.7 Information and learning barriers

4.7.1 Removing the barriers for people with learning difficulties or BSL users by providing clear written information that is accompanied by appropriate symbols and pictures can remove the barriers for people who cannot access written English for reasons not relating to disability – people with low educational attainment (who may be experiencing economic deprivation as a result) and people from BAME backgrounds (including refugees and asylum seekers)

5. St Hilda's C of E Primary School Summary of Recommendations

Target	Strategy	Time Frame	Status	Cost implication (subject to cost analysis)
5.1 Environmental improvements	Upgrade the toilet and baby change area off the main corridor to full access standards, including the addition of emergency alarm cords	1 year	Essential	£2k – £5k
	Provide an induction loop in the hall.	1 year	Essential	£2k - £5k*
	Provide an induction loop at the main counter	3 months	Desirable	£200 - £500
	Lower the bell in reception to no more than 1m from the ground and highlight it in a contrasting colour	3 months	Essential	£500
	Improve signage throughout the school especially highlighting and directing towards accessible features – toilets, baby changing areas, accessible routes.	6 – 9 months	Essential	£1k - £2k
	Provide a properly marked out, designated blue badge parking	3 – 6 months	Essential	£1k - £2k

	space to the dimensions given, within 30 m of the main entrance to the school.			
	Provide accessible gate opening mechanism for visitors or staff with blue badges	3 – 6 months	Essential	£1k - £2k
	Provide a temporary reasonable adjustment of a weather-proof sign giving the office telephone number to ring for blue badge holders who struggle to get out of their cars.	1 month	Essential	Under £100
	Identify a suitable, weather proof space for storage of mobility scooters whilst users are on the premises	3 – 6 months	Desirable	£1k
	Request that the council provides an accessible space for blue badge holders on Rye Bank Road, near to the school's entrance.	1 month	Desirable	No cost
	Provide accessible information (photograph and name, appropriately sited) about the staff in the main reception area	3 months	Desirable	Under £100

5.2 Organisational changes	Check emergency exit procedures and revise for additional students/ visitors who attend a regular basis	Rolling programme set up in 1 month	Essential	Incorporate into existing training and procedures – no extra cost anticipated.
	Upgrade procedures relating to answering toilet alarms and train all relevant staff to implement the new procedure	1 month	Essential	Incorporate into existing training and procedures - no extra cost anticipated
	Continue to make sure that all staff – including caretaking, cleaning and kitchen staff – and other building users are aware of the necessity of keeping access features clear of obstacles – e.g. corridors (especially those leading to fire escapes); leading edges of manually opened doors; and transfer spaces in accessible toilets.	1 month	Essential	Incorporate into existing training and procedures - no extra cost anticipated
	Develop and implement a process to identify whether the parents or community users of the school have any access requirements, using the results to assist with prioritising urgent	9 – 12 months	Essential	Up to £1k

	adaptations.			
	Consider setting up an Equality Panel at school which considers the adjustments required to maintain an inclusive space.	12 months	Desirable	£1k - £3k
5.3 Access to Information and Learning	<p>Provide inclusive reading material and make sure all policies and procedures that could be shared with members of the public are readily available in alternative formats – especially easy read and Braille.</p> <p>Provide an information point which lists the facilities that exist in the school and gives directions to them in the entrance hall. The information given should be supplemented with appropriate symbols. At this information point it may be appropriate to state the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all.</p>	3 months	Essential and as required*	£1k - £3k
	Check access to the website and include links to a person responsible for Equality and	3 months	Essential	£1k-£3k

	Diversity on the home page			
	Incorporate regular training for all staff in Equality issues, focusing on emergency response to toilet alarms, emergency evacuation procedures, and the practical maintenance of equality features.	1 month	Essential	£1k - £2k

5.4 Approximate estimated cost of all adaptations as above is under £30,000.

5.5 Toilet facilities and signage are essential statutory requirements and should be funded by the school.

5.6 The induction loop in the hall, although essential, is an additional cost, and could be funded through a fundraising campaign by the parents' association.

6. Access Survey St Hilda's Church of England Primary School, Rye Bank Road, Firwood.

6.1 Approach

The direction to the school is clearly indicated at the junction of Rye Bank Road and Warwick Road South. There are clearly delineated pedestrian approaches fitted with lowered kerbs. The approach road is a narrow cul-de-sac, which runs alongside the boundary fence of a secondary school, and has a narrow pavement

which provides access for driveways to residential accommodation. The pavement is narrow at points.



Signpost at junction

6.2 Parking

The gate to the car park has an audible intercom to gain entry. This is sited at more than 1 metre from the ground and is encased in a lockable metal box which is left open during school hours to allow access to the entry mechanism.

Parking on the road near to the school is restricted by mandatory school gates parking restrictions.

There is a car park for staff and visitors to the school. This has 19 spaces. There are no spaces marked for blue badge holders.

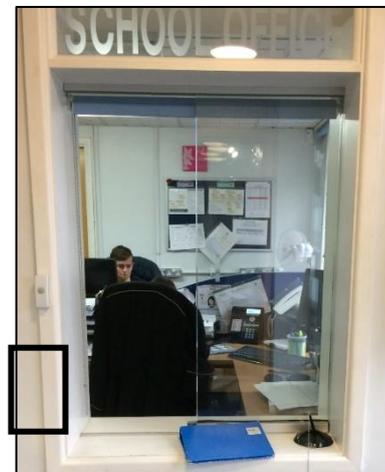
The route to the school from the pedestrian walkway is level and there is a bike storage area that is recessed away from the main route to the school. This could be adapted to store tricycles.

6.3 Main Entrance

The main door to the school opens automatically to a width of over 1 m. This leads into a large entrance lobby.

There is a reception desk in the entrance lobby which is glazed and a reception desk.

Glazed desks can be problematic for deaf people who rely on lip reading as the glass muffles the sound and the reflection on the glass makes lipreading more difficult.



Glazed reception, bell highlighted

The glazed cover is retractable, which alleviates some of these issues. There is no induction loop fitted at this counter.

At the reception point in the closed lobby, there is a pupil signing out book. There is another automatic entrance door which is operated by staff, which

leads to the entrance hall and a second signing in book for visitors to the school.

This has a lowered counter that is no more than 800mm from the floor (low enough for wheelchair users) and with a knee recess under the counter. (Please refer to picture on front cover).

There is a small bell push for attention in the secure lobby (see photograph.) This is over 1m from the ground and not highlighted in a contrasting colour.

6.4 Internal features

6.4.1 Once in the entrance lobby, there are no signs to any of the facilities in the school.

6.4.2 There is a board which contains photographs of all the teachers in the school and lists their roles. This information is placed very high up on the wall and would be more useful to everybody if it was lowered and the text follows clear print guidelines for displays (given as an appendix to this report.)

6.4.3 There is a hardwearing short pile patterned carpet in the corridor between the hall and the classrooms. This provides a measure of colour contrast between the floor and the walls. It is recommended that colour contrast between floor walls and doors is considered when the school requires redecorating.

6.4.4 There are some books in large print in the school book collections and in languages other than English. There are no Braille books.

6.4.5 There is no induction loop at reception or in the hall.

6.4.6 The fire alarms are audible only.

6.4.7 The push button operator for the door to the community area is very high (over 1200mm.) There were guitars obstructing the route to the button.

6.4.8 The Key Stage 1 fire exit door opens to a width of 920mm, which is acceptable.

6.4.9 There is a sound system used for assembly.

6.4.10 The Year 3 and the Year 4 classrooms open onto the playground. Both of these rear doors lead to a small landing with a ramp down into the playground. The doors open to a maximum width of 700mm as the push bar emergency door opening mechanism restricts the width. The ramp landing is on the small side, creating a tight turning circle for wheelchair users.

6.4.11 There are a number of step-free emergency exits from the school.



Ramped exit from classroom

6.5 Toilets

6.5.1 There are two toilets in the school that are labelled as accessible. There is also a larger cubicle with an outward opening door in the children's toilets.

Visitors' Toilet

6.5.2 The visitors' accessible toilet is within 10m of the main entrance.

6.5.3 It is not sign posted from reception. The door is labelled with an appropriate sign.

6.5.4 The door opens inwards. This is so that the door does not obstruct the corridor. The cubicle is larger than minimum standards and therefore the inward opening door does not obstruct the transfer space. The door handle is designed to be gripped and used easily and is a good colour contrast to the main door.

6.5.5 There are no grab rails to the sides of the toilet.

6.5.6 There is no floor-length, red, emergency alarm cord hanging down the side of the toilet.

6.5.7 There is a grey nappy bin obstructing the transfer space.

6.5.8 The hand wash basin is not reachable from the toilet.

6.5.9 There is a hand dryer. This is 1300mm from floor to the control for the hand dryer, too high to be easily reached from a seated position.

6.5.10 There is no portable hoist.

6.5.11 It does not incorporate a changing place. (This is a changing area for adults or older children)

6.5.12 It is understood that if a pupil enrolls into school the education authority will fund certain changes to accommodate that individual child. However, this does not apply to visitors to the school such as siblings, visiting children, parents or volunteers.



Clutter in Accessible Toilet



Contrasting colour in accessible toilet



6.5.13 There is a baby changing area but this is not accessible for disabled parents.

Continuous provision/community room accessible toilet

6.5.14 This toilet has colour contrasting grab rails. The door opens outwards and there is a baby changing table that folds against the wall. There is an appropriately sited hand dryer and the hand wash basin is reachable from the toilet. There are also grab rails by the sink. There is a full-length mirror available in the toilet.

Outward opening door
children's toilet

6.5.15 There is a red, emergency alarm cord that hangs down to the floor by the side of the toilet.

6.5.16 On the day of the audit, the transfer space next to the toilet was cluttered.

7. Conclusion

St Hilda's Church of England Primary School in Firswood is an inclusive and accessible school which regularly updates its policies, procedures and resources in line with good practice guidelines. This has led to a number of significant improvements to make the building more user friendly for all members of the school community in the last three years. The access improvements listed in this report will ensure that the requirement to anticipate the requirements of people with protected characteristics as required of public bodies such as education providers in the Equality Duty 2010. It is recognised that, in the current climate, the potential cost could be off putting. It is recommended that the implementation of the changes is phased in, to reduce budgetary pressure.

Appendix

For more about making information accessible to visually impaired people, refer to The Sensory Trust, www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/connect/infosheet_clearlargeprint.pdf

Local services (Not recommendations)

Henshaw's Society for Blind People

Local charity that provides advice and information about improving access for blind and partially sighted people, and also provides Braille and Audio Transcription services

Atherton House, 88-92 Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 0GS

Email info@henshaws.org.uk Phone [0161 872 1234](tel:01618721234) Fax [0161 848 9889](tel:01618489889)

Manchester Deaf Centre

Local charity for Deaf People that can also provide BSL interpreting

Address: Crawford House, Booth Street East, Manchester M13 9GH

Phone: [0161 273 3415](tel:01612733415)

Trafford CIL

Local disabled people's user led organisation that provides advice, information, advocacy and transitions service for disabled people and their supporters in Trafford

Trafford CIL, Marshall House, Park Avenue, Sale M33 6HE

Phone/Text 0161 8500645 Website www.traffordcil.co.uk

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, GMCDP

Disabled people's organisation providing advice and information about disability related issues in Greater Manchester.

Unit 4, Windrush Millennium Centre, 70 Alexandra Road, Moss Side, Manchester, M16 7WD

Phone: 0161 636 7534 Mobile for texts: 07508 537561

Email: info@gmcdp.com Website: www.gmcdp.com