

Accessibility Policy

Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust



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Governor Policy 1S	Author: S. Caink	Authorised by Board of Governors
Accessibility Policy	Date First Authorised: 13/11/2003	Page 1 of 9

Reviewing authority: Board of Governors

Formal Review: Every 3 years, next review due by Sep, 2024.

Date for review	Reviewed by	Reviewed by Board	A	B	C	Date of new edition
Nov 2004	S. Caink 11/04	Full Governors	*			2/12/2004
Jan 2007	S. Caink 01/07	Full Governors		*		25/1/07
Jul 2008	S. Caink 06/08	Full Governors	*			21/07/08
Nov 2009	S. Caink 11/09	Full Governors	*			24/11/09
Feb 2011	S. Caink 02/11	Full Governors	*			24/03/11
Feb 2012	S. Caink	Full Governors	*			8/5/2012
Aug 2013	S. Caink 08/13	Full Governors	*			12/9/2013
Aug 2014	S. Caink 08/14	Full Governors	*			11/9/14
Mar 2017	S. Caink 03/17	Full Governors	*			09/5/2017
Sep 2021	A Clarke	Full Governors		*		07/09/2021

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1. Introduction

In the Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Code of Practice (DfE, 2015, p.15-16), it states A child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or
- has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions

From 1 September 2014, the following guidance ceased to have effect:

- SEN Code of Practice (2001)
- Inclusive Schooling (2001)
- Section 139A Learning Difficulty Assessments Statutory Guidance (2013)

Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. This definition provides a relatively low threshold and includes more children than many realise: ‘long-term’ is defined as ‘a year or more’ and ‘substantial’ is defined as ‘more than minor or trivial’. This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the legal obligations that schools, early years providers, post-16 institutions, local authorities and others have towards disabled children and young people:

- They must not directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children and young people

- They must not discriminate for a reason arising in consequence of a child or young person's disability
- They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, to ensure that disabled children and young people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers.
- Public bodies, including further education institutions, local authorities, maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies and free schools are covered by the public sector equality duty and, when carrying out their functions, must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between disabled and nondisabled children and young people.

The academy will endeavour to adopt the recommendations set out in the Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities Code of Practice (2015) arising from the Children and Families Act (2014) with the main changes from the previous SEN Code of Practice (SEN Code of Practice 2001) being reflected in the Children and Families Act 2014.

This Accessibility Policy should be read in conjunction with Southend High School for Girl's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Policy, SEND Information Report, Supporting Students with Medical Conditions and the Equality and Discrimination Policy. These policies can be found on the school's website www.shsg.org or requesting a copy by emailing office@shsg.org.

2. Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust Accessibility Policy and Plan

This policy sets out how Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust aims to improve its accessibility over time. The aims of the strategy are to improve access to the physical environment and to overcome barriers to learning, as well as to deliver information to people with a disability, and to try to anticipate problems that would make it difficult for disabled persons within our premises.

Improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education, benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school.

It is the policy of the school to improve access for disabled persons to all buildings and to facilitate free movement for the disabled within each building. We recognise that disabled persons include people with visual/hearing/other impairments, as well as wheelchair users.

In recent years, five passenger lifts and two stair lifts have been installed and so, in addition to being able to access the whole of school's ground floor areas, people with a disability and wheelchair users can now move to the upstairs: Technology and Sports Blocks, the Sixth Form and the humanities and science classrooms. The Drama Studio and Sixth Form classrooms installed in 2014 have graded paths that facilitate wheelchair access to the buildings.

The school has established ICT suites in a variety of locations, including Computer Science classrooms and the library. The wireless network has been expanded and laptops are available throughout the school site allowing students including disabled persons to gain access to the internet from all areas of the school.

The upper three floors in the Tower block are now the only areas within the school that are not physically accessible to wheelchair users. Until the school is able to provide access to these floors, it will be necessary to accommodate disabled wheelchair users in ground floor classrooms.

Whenever new buildings are constructed or existing buildings are renovated, active consideration is given, as a priority, to improving accessibility. This includes providing accessible student workstations and washrooms. Directional signage will be appropriate for the visually impaired and steps taken to ensure the safety for the students with a hearing impairment such as installing fire alarms with flashing lights.

At the point where rooms are being redecorated or new furniture acquired, consideration will be given to: widening doors; changing colour schemes; fitting acoustic material / microphones; the installation of workstations with additional space / wider access; special computer equipment including larger keyboards; and appropriate lighting.

Until the school is fully accessible to people with a disability, students and staff will continue to pay close attention to the needs of disabled people visiting the school. This will involve the careful preparation of Individual Health Care Plans and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans. Reserved car parking spaces are maintained adjacent to all school buildings for use by vehicles that transport disabled persons.

Details of how disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum and access information that is readily accessible to those who are not disabled

At Southend High School for Girls we and believe all children have the right to a balanced and broad curriculum. Quality first teaching is key in this success. It is the stated policy of the school that all departments differentiate their curriculum in order to make it accessible to all students. Teachers are inclusive and will endeavour to support every child regardless of their level of need. Staff training and regular communication is central in identifying needs and supporting learners in the classroom. Support is provided to those students believed to be underachieving whilst the most academically able are challenged and extended.

Practical and technical support of various kinds will be provided to assist disabled students, e.g. specialist strategies to aid learning and organisation, adaptable ICT computer equipment, in-class practical support for a severely epileptic or visually impaired students; specialist equipment for the partially sighted/those students experiencing visual stress (including overlays/modified exercise books), as well as employment of additional staff (such as a communication support worked), mentoring by staff, professional consultants and counsellors in addition to peer support from the older students.

It is essential that the atmosphere in classrooms is stimulating, positive and supportive and that differences between students are recognised constructively and catered for. School policy requires schemes of work and lesson plans to reflect the different needs and abilities of students in terms of activities, level of support and resources used in the classroom. Resources are adapted according to the needs of the students.

Relevant staff are made aware of specific known special educational needs and/or medical problems and are expected to take appropriate action and to be sensitive and discreet. Additional support is provided if necessary. Due to the layout of the building, in particular the Tower, it is not currently possible to provide fully for those with severe and permanent mobility difficulties. As the main school buildings are altered and extended, this issue is being addressed, and overall accessibility has been improved significantly.

Students with temporary mobility restrictions can have their classrooms reassigned to the ground floor and be permitted to leave lessons early to avoid congestion in corridors. The safety and wellbeing of students with special needs in emergency evacuation situations is considered, and emergency evacuation chairs are positioned adjacent to all stairwells.

Similarly, planning and risk assessments for visits and trips take into account the particular needs of disabled students including those with special educational needs and/or medical conditions.

3. Examinations

In order to allow students with SEND/medical conditions equal access to examinations, access arrangements are organised based on meeting an eligibility criteria. Access Arrangements are pre-examination adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. These can include physical resources such as a modified paper or medical breaks for a diabetic to go to the toilet to help lower their blood glucose levels to name a couple of examples.

Exam Access Arrangements are led by the SENDCo with the Exams Officer and the Assessment Lead in line with the JCQ guidelines. Heads of Year are also involved in the process and alert the SENDCo to any students who might need access arrangements or require reasonable adjustments. More information about this can be read on <https://www.icq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/> in the document entitled Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

In rare circumstances when a student has suddenly become unwell during the examination or has been diagnosed with a medical condition leading to them having a substantial disadvantage compared to their peers close to/during their examinations and access arrangements are not able to be put in place, then a case may be put forward for special consideration.

As Southend High School for Girls (Years 7-11) is a selective grammar school, the 11+ must be taken and passed in order to achieve a place at the school. All schools within the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex (CSSE) are committed to ensuring fair access for candidates of suitable ability. When registering their child to sit the 11+, the parents inform the CSSE of any specific arrangements that need to be made on the day of the test by completing the CSSE's supplementary information form and attaching appropriate medical evidence. These arrangements could include access arrangements e.g. rest breaks, extra time, a prompt or it could include physical access arrangements, e.g. Wheelchair access to the test room and other facilities appropriate to wheelchair users, enlarging print.

All decisions regarding access arrangements for the 11 plus examination will be taken by the CSSE.

More information can be found at <https://csse.org.uk/examination/>.

Once the child has been allocated a place, the parents then complete an enrolment form where they can disclose any medical conditions or special educational needs. This is then triaged and information is given to the relevant member of staff. If the SENDCo is given any information, then the family will be contacted and an initial parent meeting will be organised to discuss support that will be put in place. Additional visits may take place prior to the pupil starting. SEND documents will be created and sent to the relevant subject teacher.

When students are joining the 6th form, pupils need to achieve a required amount of points from their GCSE grades (changes annually). If a place is offered, the parents will complete an enrolment form about their child detailing any medical conditions, SEND needs and any access arrangements the students had at their previous setting. The pastoral support officer for 6th form will triage this and note down any medical/SEND needs that the SENDCo will need information about to put support in place including any access arrangements for exams. Additional medical evidence will then be requested. If the SENDCo is given any information, then the family will be contacted and an initial parent meeting will be organised to discuss support that will be put in place.

When students are in Year 13, their future pathways are discussed. Relevant support is then provided including helping them apply for a University through UCAS or for a job/apprenticeship. This helps ensure that students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities are not treated less favourably than others and can access their future work/learning environment.

4. Information about the Southend Borough Council Local Offer of services and provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Southend on Sea Borough Council is able to provide further educational support for people with a disability within the borough. A directory of services is available from the Civic Centre. The directory details how schools may access special audio / visual

equipment and literature in alternative formats for the visually impaired and hard of hearing. The Council can also produce documents in braille. The school will maintain contact with the council via the Social Inclusion Trainer from time to time (Tel: 534389) in order to remain abreast of the services available.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has published a Local Offer which gives parents/carers, young people and practitioners advice on where and how they can access support. This outlines all support services in the area and sets out what provision the Local Authority expects to be available for children and young people in the area with SEN and/or disabilities. This can be accessed via the following link: <https://livewellsouthend.com/kb5/southendonsea/directory/localoffer.page?localofferchannel=0>

As a school within Southend Borough, we have access to specialist practitioners via outreach services such as Autism Spectrum Disorder resource bases, Speech and Language/Hearing Impaired and Visual Impairments. Working in partnership with these services, helps to provide the best care for students at our school with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

Appendix A Southend High School for Girls Academy Trust Access Plan

Plan	Benefit / Objective	Timescale	Responsibility
Whenever rooms are being renovated management will give active consideration, as a priority, to: - widening access to desktop workstations, the installation of blinds, and the appropriateness of colour schemes, lighting and acoustics.	Ensure all rooms are appropriate for the needs of disabled students / visitors.	Ongoing.	Director of Finance & Business and Premises Manager.
Lobby EFA for funds to install a lift in all new building of two floors or more.	Accessibility of school physically increased.	Ongoing	Headteacher, Director of Finance & Business.
Differentiate curriculum	Ensure that the needs of disabled students to access curriculum are met.	Ongoing	HOF's, SLT, Teachers.

Developments, over recent years to improve accessibility include:

The installation of: - two stair lifts, four platform lifts and one passenger lift.

Accessible washrooms fitted in each building with wash and toilet facilities.

Concrete graded ramps built to all main entrances.

Workstations are accessible in specific areas of the school e.g. science and food technology.

Access to ICT through an extensive network of computer suites and wireless internet access points. Classrooms have access to Laptops from portable laptop trolleys.

Tailor made ICT equipment provided to several individuals.

Reception area developed with low-level desk space and appropriate lighting.

Portable ramps available and outside ramp to the library.

High visibility markings painted on leading edges.

Reserved parking for vehicles driven by disabled drivers.