The Abbey

Disability Policy

The Abbey School, Reading

Reviewed by:	Head of Finance and Resources	May 2025
Ratified by:	Whole School Leadership Committee and Governors Audit	May 2025
Next review: May 2027		

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1. Aims of this policy

This Policy should be read in conjunction with The Abbey School Accessibility Plan. The aims of this policy are:

- to afford opportunity to employees and students who are disabled;
- to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and The Children and Families Act 2014;
- to have regard to the guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in "What equality law means for you as an education provider: schools", April 2014 and the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years, January 2015, updated September 2024.

2. Policy statement

The Abbey School will:

- maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people in all the activities of the School;
- train staff to understand the types of disabilities and how to deal with employees and students who are disabled. Staff will not be expected, unless medically qualified or trained, to administer medication;
- adopt user-friendly procedures for considering admissions from parents of disabled children, and consult with those parents about the reasonable adjustments which can be made to ensure that the admissions process is accessible for their children;
- implement and review the Accessibility Plan with the aim of increasing the accessibility of the School's curriculum, improving the physical environment of the School and improving access to information for our employees, students and prospective students and their parents;
- keep under review the School's Admission Policy, Equal Opportunities and Anti-Bullying policies.

3. Disability

- A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a "*substantial and long-term adverse effect*" on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activity. (Equality Act 2010).

  By way of further explanation:
  - physical disability includes medical conditions for which a person needs to use a wheelchair, for example, cerebral palsy or brittle bones but also a sensory impairment or sensory loss when there is a problem with one of the senses;
  - mental impairment includes social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs where a person has severe difficulties in managing emotions and behaviour or has severe issues with communicating and interacting with the world;
  - long-term" means a period of 12 months or longer.

- Other disabilities which may amount to a medical disability include:

  - severe disfigurements, scarring conditions and birthmarks (but not including tattoos or piercings);
  - progressive conditions which will result in a substantial long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activity;
  - a controlled impairment, i.e. a person with a prosthesis, or a person with drug-controlled epilepsy or diabetes;

- a history of impairment, for example a person who used to be disabled and has recovered, for example, a person with a previous mental illness.

4. Discrimination

We will not knowingly discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements for determining admission or employment procedures;
- in the terms on which a place at the School is offered;
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for admission or employment;
- in the provision of education and associated services;
- in the way the School affords access to any benefit, service or facility offered or provided by the School;
- by excluding a person on the grounds of his or her disability;
- by harassing a person with a disability;
- by victimising a person with a disability;
- by failing to take steps to ensure that disabled persons are not placed at a substantial; disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled persons.

5. Admission procedure for students

- The School is open to applications from any prospective student with a physical; sensory; social, emotional and mental health or medical need.
- The School will treat every application from a disabled child in a fair, open-minded way.
- Every application will be considered on its merits within the School's criteria for selection on grounds of the child's ability and aptitude in line with our Admissions Policy.
- It is the responsibility of parents to make the School aware of any known disability or special educational need which may affect a student's ability to participate in the admissions procedure and take full advantage of the education provided at the School. This should be done at registration, or as soon as diagnosed if the admission process has begun. Copies of any reports carried out by specialists such as a Chartered Educational Psychologist should be provided to the School.
- The School will, if appropriate, request from the parents or previous School full details in the form of medical reports, educational psychologist reports and any other report which assesses the child's disability so that the School can assess the reasonable adjustments that would be needed to provide adequately for the child's physical and educational needs.
- If the child meets the academic entry requirements for the School but if, after all Reasonable Adjustments have been made, the School is not able to provide adequately or appropriately for the child's physical; sensory; medical; social, emotional and mental health and educational needs, then the child will not be offered a place.
- The School will inform the parents of their decision and give details of the reasonable adjustments they are prepared to make or give reasons why the offer of a place will not be made.

6. Education and associated services

The School has an ongoing duty to make reasonable adjustments in respect of the education and associated services provided by the School. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of school life. The range of activities that are covered by the expression include:

- the curriculum, classroom organisation and timetabling;
- access to school facilities and school sports;
- school policies;

- breaks and lunchtimes and the serving of school meals;
- assessment and examination arrangements;
- school discipline, sanctions and exclusion procedures;
- school clubs, educational visits and other activities;
- preparation of students for the next phase of education.

7. Reasonable Adjustments for students

When providing educational services to a student, the School is legally required to make 'reasonable adjustments' in order to cater for a student's disability. The School shall inform the student and parents of the reasonable adjustments that the School are legally required to make for that student, which may typically include:

- making arrangements for a child in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room;
- allowing approved access arrangements for an entrance exam, for example, providing examination papers in larger print for a student with a visual impairment;
- rearranging the timetable to allow a student to attend a class in an accessible part of the building arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.

The School is not legally required to make adjustments which include:

- physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities, such as a new library;
- auxiliary aids and services such as radio aids for hearing impaired pupils;
- teaching or learning support assistants.

The Equality Act 2010 requires all schools to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled students from their own resources where these are deemed to be a “reasonable adjustment” without passing the cost on to parents.

8. The Use of Pupil Passports or Care Plans to support Students with disabilities

Where the needs of a student require, the School will liaise with all professionals working with the student to devise a Pupil Passport or a Care Plan to ensure that the student can play a full and active part in school life, stay healthy and fulfil their potential. NB Students might require an in-school Pupil Passport or Care Plan even when they do not meet the criteria for an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).

9. Reasonable Adjustments for the public

The School may provide services to the public, for example at:

- open days;
- parents' evenings;
- concerts and plays;
- exhibitions;
- conferences (including residential conferences during holiday periods);
- use of sports facilities.

Where a physical feature (for example steps, entrances, exits, toilet facilities) makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a disabled person to access the service, schools are required to take reasonable steps to:

- remove the feature; or

- alter it so it no longer has that effect; or
- provide reasonable means of avoiding the feature; or
- provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available.

Where an Auxiliary Aid or Service would enable a disabled person to make use of a service, schools are required to take reasonable steps to provide it. An Auxiliary Aid or Service could be something as simple as extra assistance from a member of staff or a large print sign, or it might be a temporary ramp where steps are preventing wheelchair access.

10. Disclosure

- Parents will be requested to provide the School with copies of the child's latest medical report, educational psychologist's report and any other information regarding the student's disability.
- If, following the offer of the place, it is discovered that the School has not received full disclosure of information relating to the child's disability and the School is not able to make Reasonable Adjustments for those disabilities, then the School may withdraw the offer of a place, or ask the parents to withdraw a child who is already a student.
- The School will have due regard to any request by a parent or student (who has sufficient understanding of the nature and effect of the request) to treat the nature or existence of a person's disability as confidential.

11. Review procedure

Parents may request a review if the School decides it is unable to offer their child a place on the grounds of disability. The request must be made to the Head in writing within seven working days of the Admission decision being notified to parents. The request must state clearly the grounds for the review and any reasonable adjustments that the school might consider. The Head will consider the request and respond in writing at the earliest opportunity.

12. Accessibility Plan

The School has prepared an Accessibility Plan which is available on the School website for all parents, staff and visitors. The Accessibility Plan includes consideration of how the School proposes to:

- increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school's curriculum;
- improve the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School;
- improve the delivery to disabled students of information which is readily accessible to students who are not disabled.

13. Other Related Policies and Information

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Equality and Accessibility Plan
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Absence Policy and Procedure (Employees)