



**Scottish Borders Council
Children and Young People's
Service**

**Accessibility Strategy
For Schools**

2019 to 2022

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Throughout this document the words ‘Act’ and ‘the Act’ refer to the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils’ Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the fifth strategy following the introduction of the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records)(Scotland) Act 2002 which requires local authorities to prepare and implement accessibility strategies to improve, over time, access to education for pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.
- 1.2 The word 'access' is used in its widest sense and includes:
- the school curriculum
 - physical access to premises and facilities
 - communication with pupils with a disability, including taking into account a pupil's needs and any preferences that they or their parents express
- 1.3 These duties came into force in October 2002 and will enable long-term strategic planning to be carried out in relation to school education in Scottish Borders, to improve access for all pupils with disabilities, as well as promoting a positive attitude towards disability in all schools and communities.
- 1.4 The Act complements the requirements of the UK-wide Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA), which amended and added to Part IV of the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.5 The Act applies to both the state and independent sectors throughout Scotland. For the state sector, the responsible body is the local education authority (Scottish Borders Council). This strategy will cover all the schools and nursery classes for which it is directly responsible. The strategy does not require covering pre-school education provided by private or voluntary sector providers operating in partnership with the local authority. However, in negotiating contracts with these providers, Scottish Borders Council will endeavour to ensure that providers are committed to improving access to pupils with disabilities.

The legal context

1.6 The Disability Discrimination Act defines a person as disabled if he or she:

“has a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. “

(Part I, section 1(1))

1.7 Other related legislation applicable to various aspects of the strategy includes:

- Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act 2000
- The Education (National Priorities) (Scotland) Order 2000 [Scottish Statutory Instrument No.443]
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Education (Scotland) Act 1980 - as amended
- Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974
- Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 as amended.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Equality Act 2010

2. Recent Developments

- 2.1 The Strategy has continued its steady progress in the last six years. All 9 high schools have had access audits implemented alongside a number of primary schools.
- 2.2 The current investment in the school estate will enable further DDA Access Audits to be implemented in schools across the Borders.
- 2.3 The teaching post for Access to the Curriculum (ICT) which is currently by two part time teachers continues to make a substantial contribution to supporting pupils. Access to digital technologies is integral to supporting pupils with additional support needs and the implementation of 'Inspire Learning' will maximise opportunities for all young people.

3. Access to the curriculum

Within the Curriculum element of the strategy there are four key strands. Self-evaluation and monitoring, training and development, efficient use of specialist equipment and extra – curricular activities.

3.1 Self-evaluation and monitoring
Schools are required to ensure that all school activities and tasks within the school and departmental improvement plans are planned to reflect the needs of all learners.
As schools review and update existing policies they ensure that they reflect the needs of all pupils.

Action points

- Continue to promote use of audit tools for schools on DDA curriculum accessibility, including the Children in Scotland Pupil Audit and HGIOS 4.
- Ensure all schools have updated electronic policies including appropriate links.
- Advise Management Teams that the Accessibility Officer is available to support schools.

3.2 Training and development.

Training in inclusive practices is available for all staff in SBC schools through the professional learning programme, and on individual request.

Schools are expected to review and continue the auditing and action planning process as appropriate to the needs of their pupils.

Schools are required to ensure all new staff are directed to and have access to the SBC Inclusion Strategy.

Inclusive practices continue to be embedded in all areas of school life, particularly through the development of pupil participation and learner voice.

Training to promote effective use of the Children In Scotland Pupil Audit tool will be available through the CPD Directory and on request for individual schools.

Action points

- SBC Inclusion Strategy will support inclusive education in all schools
- The Accessibility Strategy Lead Officer is available to support and develop inclusion with schools.
- The Teachers: Access to the Curriculum (ICT) is available to support and offer training on IT support needs.

3.3 Efficient use of specialist equipment

Accessibility Strategy funding continues to support schools to provide special equipment and time limited personnel to meet the needs of pupils with additional needs.

The knowledge of the Accessibility Officer facilitates the purchase of specialist equipment for schools.

The Teachers: Access to the Curriculum (ICT) and Support for Learning teachers advise and support schools with ICT solutions. Connections are made with National Bodies such as Atlas (Assistive Technology for Learners Across Scotland) and CALLScotland.

There is regular and ongoing communication between NHS Borders Allied Health Professionals and Children and Young Peoples Service staff to provide appropriate equipment for pupils.

The contract with NHS Borders and Social Work which allows access to a significant pool of specialist equipment continues.

Action points

- The Accessibility Officer facilitates the purchase of specialist equipment for schools along with ICT solutions.
- The strategy will continue to consider funding for new ICT resources which support pupils with disabilities.
- The teachers: Access to the Curriculum and Support for Learning teachers (ICT) will continue to raise awareness of, and to promote new developments in ICT.

3.4 Extra –curricular activities

Ways to support access to extra-curricular activities and wider curricular experiences have been established by the Accessibility Strategy

1. Targeting support,
2. Developing strategies
3. Identifying suitable places for in-school and out of school clubs and activities.

An audit of the most frequently used residential centres has been carried out and a report has been written to identify the most inclusive centres. Please contact the Accessibility Officer for further information.

Action points

- Management teams of schools will be advised that the Accessibility Officer is available for advice on inclusive trips and facilities.
- The report on residential centres is available from the Accessibility Officer.

4. Access to the Physical Environment

4.1 Physical adaptation - general

The lives of pupils within Scottish Borders Council have been significantly enriched from the continued investment in their physical environment. The two areas which continue to direct the strategy are the school access audits and their implementation, and the specific needs of pupils.

The strategy will continue to implement the physical access audits over time for all schools. However almost all schools that support pupils with physical disabilities have been covered since the legislation was introduced. The priority of the strategy will always be to ensure where specific needs arise for pupils that this would take preference over the general access audits. Many primary schools have had access audits fully implemented such as, Wilton, Chirnside, Broughton and Greenlaw. New Primary schools have also been built which provide excellent access via the Schools of the Future model. All High Schools are now fully accessible for all pupils as far as is practicable.

Action points

- Disability Discrimination Act access audit of all schools over time.
- Accessibility Strategy Group to define priority for the order in which schools will be audited.

4.2 Physical adaptation – specific pupils

A key priority for the Accessibility Strategy is to continue to support pupils at their local school where practical. The type of support may include equipment such as seating but may also cover such things as ramps, improved changing facilities and better classroom environment for pupils.

The lead officer for the strategy continues to monitor and liaise with all school staff to ensure that the individual needs of pupils are met in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act.

Although many schools satisfy the legislation this may still mean that adaptations may be required to meet the individual needs.

The aim of the strategy will also be to continue to support the needs of individual pupils in specific schools where appropriate if physical adaptations are essential to enable the child to access the school in which they have been enrolled. This will ensure that all pupils have access to their local school and will enable all pupils to be educated at their local school,

subject to placing request procedures, where appropriate. The strategy will ensure that this takes place via liaison and communication with Head teachers and other relevant staff to plan for pupils needs at the earliest possible stage.

Action points

- Set clear priorities for carrying out works identified in audits
- Schools must make the Accessibility Officer aware of new pupils at the earliest opportunity to allow time for works to be delivered.

4.3 Auditing physical access

The strategy has identified the priority for schools which will have a full access audit. The audits will then be implemented on a priority basis within the designated budget.

Action points

- Set up standing group for long term physical accessibility strategy prioritisation
- Inform evacuation procedures for schools, to include the procedures for disabled pupils and staff
- Physical access strategy & school estate management strategy to be considered as part of the Council's requirements within the Public Private Partnership process

4.4 Support for Health and Fire Safety Issues

The strategy continues to work in partnership with SBC Wellbeing and Safety section in order to achieve compliance with health and safety and fire legislation.

The wellbeing and safety section gives advice and support to school staff in the development of risk assessments and individual health care plans for pupils with individual needs. The strategy standing group will continue to identify and implement the training and development of school staff in moving and handling and safe evacuation through Personal Emergency and Evacuation Plans (PEEP's).

- Individual Officers with relevant expertise will provide the necessary advice, support and training to all schools as relevant.

5. Communication

Within the Communication element of the strategy there are three key strands - information, pupil participation, consultation and training

5.1 Information
To promote the availability of published leaflets from SBC and personal information such as reports, learning plans and letters in forms that are accessible to parents and pupils with disabilities e.g. audio, Braille, electronic information and large print
To provide information for schools on accessibility of centres for residential trips and day visits, as part of ongoing school education.
To ensure links between the Accessibility Strategy and council initiatives and services

Action Points

- All Children and Young Peoples Services documentation in the authority to be made available in alternative and electronic formats upon request
- Provision of interpreter services where necessary to improve communications with pupils and parents

5.2 Pupil participation
Promote the participation of all pupils with a disability in contributing to decisions that affect their education

Action Points

- The Accessibility Strategy will review practice in promoting pupil participation in decisions that affect their education across Scottish Borders Council and develop appropriate training and materials. The Strategy will continue to review this via the regular meetings. Consultation will take place with Quality Improvement Team members and other Education Managers via the Learning Boards.

5.3 Consultation

To listen and learn, from pupils with additional support needs, and mainstream pupils on all aspects of accessibility and inclusion in their schools

To ensure the views expressed by the above stakeholders impact on the Accessibility Strategy and are incorporated into the schools and councils ongoing development of accessible education – action in curriculum and physical access

Action Points

- Consultation with parents and pupils on all (and future) aspects of the Accessibility Strategy.

6. KEY FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Physical Access

The council continues to commit substantial funds to ensure that the programme of change is implemented across SBC schools. The essential physical access requirements for all nine high schools is now fully implemented where appropriate enabling all pupils to be educated in their local community where practical. The key primary schools have also had significant work undertaken and again this work is being progressed where local needs arise and via a programme of delivery via Capital Funding.

Information and Communication Technology

The SBC Inspire learning programme will support digital literacy and will enable all pupils the opportunity to access learning through ipads. A range of apps which promote access will be provided as appropriate for all young people.

