

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Context

St Catherine's strives to ensure that its culture and ethos are such that, whatever the abilities and needs of members of its community, everyone is valued equally and treats one another with respect. Students will be provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and value diversity.

This plan seeks to address the statutory requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and to further St Catherine's strategic priorities by continuing to improve all aspects of the physical environment of the site and other resources so that disabled students can take full advantage of the education and associated opportunities provided.

Equality Act 2010

'A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.
Equality Act 2010

St Catherine's recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010, which has simplified and strengthened the discrimination laws which protect people from unfair treatment.

It is unlawful for an education provider to treat a disabled student unfavourably through: direct discrimination; indirect discrimination; discrimination arising from a disability; and/or harassment. Education providers must take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled students at a substantial disadvantage.

Scope of the plan

1. Improving the physical environment for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled students are able to take advantage of education, therapy, care and associated services.
2. Improving the physical environment for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled staff and visitors can access the site.
3. Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum.
4. Improving the delivery of information to students with disabilities.

Assessment

- There have been a number of improvements to the physical environment with respect, for example, to additional hand railing across the school and sixth form sites and in the houses; visibility paint/tape to highlight steps and hand rails; disabled parking bays provided in the lower car-park and more vigorous monitoring of their availability; the purchase of specialist ICT equipment, desks, chairs, cutlery, portable aids and other equipment; and the installation of ramps, a wheelchair-

accessible entrance to the upper part of the school site and a wheelchair-accessible toilet in the main building.

- St Catherine's occupational therapy team work with staff from all departments and with individual students across the school site, in classrooms and in the residential houses to support students' access to all activities. Therapists advise whether specific adaptations are necessary and these recommendations are acted upon.
- The steep gradient of many parts of the site means that wheelchair access is very restricted at present. Due to the current limitations of the buildings and the landscape, the school is unable to support students and staff who are wheelchair users because of the risks attached to evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- Resources are being sought to improve accessibility and the redevelopment of the site and buildings is a long-term aim, subject to the identification of the necessary finances.
- A rolling programme of work across the site seeks to make continuous improvements with respect, for example, to improving lighting, avoiding shiny reflective surfaces and using contrasting colours wherever feasible.
- Children and young people at St Catherine's usually have a Statement of Special Educational Need/Education, Health & Care Plan which describes their primary disability as being speech, language and communication needs.
- The school provides a modified curriculum based upon the National Curriculum that has been developed specifically for students with speech, language and communication needs. The sixth form centre uses a flexible combination of nationally-accredited courses to provide the framework for the delivery of a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum.
- Each student has an individual programme tailored to meet their specific needs. High staff-to-student ratios are maintained to facilitate greater individual attention. Each class has a teacher, a speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist who work collaboratively to plan programmes and agree targets. Additionally, occupational therapy assistants and learning support assistants work with students both within the classroom and on a one-to-one basis.
- Each student has a keyworker in the care team and together they identify the skills needed to develop the self-confidence and independence of the young people. Individual Care Action Plans are agreed, linked with the student's Individual Education Plan and the development of independence skills.
- Pen portraits are shared by staff to highlight students' individual needs and particular areas for support. Risk assessments are undertaken when and if there are specific areas of concern with respect to individual students.
- Arrangements are made to enable students to access exams, through the provision of readers, scribes, oral language modifiers, transcripts and/or additional time during exams as appropriate.

- Work is on-going towards improving signage and other means of communication across the site. All of the buildings on the main school site have been renamed and colour-coded to aid students' understanding of locations.
- A number of members of staff have been trained in the use of a recognised symbol system to enhance students' understanding of the printed word.
- Staff from each department have been trained in sign-supported English and St Catherine's is working to become a whole school signing environment.

Priorities

- To ensure that these developments do not fall into disrepair, all improvements made under this Accessibility Plan will be built into the regular checks of appropriate staff.
- To continue to ensure that staff are fully aware of individuals' specific needs and differentiation.
- To continue to improve the ways in which students' awareness of their individual targets and progress towards these is communicated.
- To continue to develop total communication across the school by:
 - becoming a signing environment;
 - developing the use of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) for students for whom it is appropriate; and
 - ensuring a consistent approach to the use of symbols across the school.

Evaluation: The Accessibility Plan will be reviewed at least every three years.

Monitored by Governors Jul 2014

Reviewed Oct 2010 / Jan 2013 / Jul 2014 / Feb 2015 / Jan 2018