



Disability Equality Scheme

Aim:

Notre Dame School is an Inclusive school where “every person belongs” and we “give equality of opportunity to all our students” (Mission Statement and Inclusion Statement).

Schools are required to implement a Disability Equality Scheme, drawing on existing good practice and the Disability Access Plan, to ensure consistency of accessibility across all aspects of school life for disabled students, staff and stakeholders. As with other school policies relating to the duty of Equality, the aim is to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably or otherwise disadvantaged.

Definition:

“A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” The definition was broadened by the Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005. Within the Act a person must be substantially affected by their disability in one of the following capacities:

- Mobility
- Physical co-ordination
- Manual dexterity
- Speech, hearing, eyesight
- Contenance
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- Memory or ability to learn, concentrate or understand
- Perception of physical risk or danger

DCSF recommends that all students with SEN and those students and staff with long term medical needs to be treated as disabled for the purposes of the Act and for equality e.g. Asthma, Diabetes, Mental health issues or impairment, Cancer and Cancer recovery, Multiple Sclerosis and HIV.

Under this definition a disabled person does not necessarily have Special Education Needs.

The Duty:

Notre Dame recognises its Disability Equality Duty to promote equality of opportunity to all our students through due regard to the following:

- To promote equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled persons;
- To eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- To eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their impairment;
- To promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- To encourage participation by disabled persons in public life;
- To take steps to take account of a disabled person’s impairments even where that involves treating the disabled person more favourably than other persons.

The duty applies to students, staff, parents and members of the public who use school facilities. The duty impacts on existing policies and procedures relating to all stakeholders through the emphasis we place on ethos and inclusion at every level of school life.

Reasonable adjustment must be made to ensure students and prospective students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students, although this does not include having to remove or alter physical features (covered by longer term LA and school planning). The Act does not define “reasonable” but schools can take account of the need to maintain academic and other standards, the funding available and the practicalities of making particular adjustment. The health & safety of the disabled student and others as well as the interests of other students can also be considered.

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The introduction of this scheme, together with existing School Improvement Priorities, will provide a framework to consolidate and ensure consistency in educational provision for disabled children; encourage the school to think strategically about other disabled stakeholders and promote a greater knowledge and understanding of disability.

Implementation:

1. A Disability Access Plan was adopted in 2002, revised in 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2016, to increase accessibility for disabled students, staff and parents, which set out short term, medium term and long term priorities under three strands:
 - Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum
 - Improving access to the Physical Environment of the school
 - Improving the delivery of information to disabled students, staff, parents and users of school facilitiesConsiderable progress has been made, particularly since the completion of the new Classroom block, Sports Hall and Resource Centre in September 2008.
2. An Access Audit was conducted by the Local Authority in 2013 and an Action Plan implemented to address key issues. Considerations for DDA in future Asset Management planning are included and bids are submitted for Access funding whenever possible. Emergency planning includes safe refuges for disabled persons and Personal Egress Escape Plans.
3. Our Disability Equality Scheme aims to identify and remove barriers to education whether physical, attitudinal or organisational. The two schemes above address many of the physical barriers and involve organisational barriers in respect of curriculum delivery, content and diversity. Communication is key to improving attitudes and organisational structures for pastoral support and welfare, extra-curricular and community activities and employment issues are fundamental to successful implementation of the Scheme.

The following framework identifies examples of successfully implemented strategies, but is not exhaustive or frozen in time. It is indicative of the importance Notre Dame places on equality in all aspects of school life.

3.1 Involvement and Consultation: Notre Dame regularly seeks the views of stakeholders through staff and student forums, questionnaires and consultation. The outcome of evaluations and consultation is used to inform future School Improvement planning. Student Voice is particularly important and all students are encouraged to take active roles in the life of the school. Our Pastoral and Learning Support systems promote positive attitudes and respect. Equality of opportunity is important and the school celebrates its diversity. Key school documents are now available on the website and can be accessed in large print formats. The weekly staff Bulletin is regularly used to raise the profile of School Improvement and Action plans; for consultation and raising awareness.

3.2 Eliminate discrimination: Notre Dame manages its own admission process within the criteria detailed in the Admission policy. All prospective students and their parents/carers have the opportunity to discuss admission with the school and the arrangements for admission of disabled students are no different. Staff work with parents/carers to maximise the learning opportunities for all students and reasonable adjustments will always be considered to accommodate particular needs. Support from outside agencies would be sought as required.

We will develop positive attitudes to disability by raising awareness within the school community and taking opportunities, wherever possible, to promote disability awareness and equality, e.g. through assemblies, PSHE lessons, the SEAL programme and in staff training.

The Behaviour Management system is applied consistently and encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and to understand how their actions may affect others, however, reasonable adjustments would be made for students with challenging behaviour as a result of their disability.

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3.3 Curriculum: In line with our Special Educational Needs Policy, Notre Dame believes that all pupils should receive a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to their educational needs and that there is equal access to the curriculum and equal opportunities for all children. Our strategies to ensure this are detailed in The Special Educational Needs Policy.

Notre Dame has a pupil tracking system, which provides current data on pupil attainment and achievement. This system also provides specific information on pupil disability and attainment. Pupils with a disability will be registered on admission to the School. Information will be collected through the transfer of records from previous schools, the local authority and parents to ascertain pupil needs and levels of attainment and achievement in order that consideration is given to provision and access to curriculum. Further detail is available in our school's SEN and Admissions Policies.

In order that pupils have full access to the curriculum the school will prioritise aspects of the school Accessibility Plan so that pupils with a disability are ensured greater participation in the curriculum. Individualised provision will be given to the management of pupils with medical & mental health needs in respect to their care & support plans, to access the curriculum.

Extra-curriculum activities are well planned in advance and every opportunity would be taken to ensure disabled students and staff can participate, particularly during Work Experience or Enrichment Week.

3.4 Eliminating harassment and bullying: Our Pastoral structure encourages building positive social relationships – within the Tutor group, House team and PSHE programme, which includes Citizenship modules. All forms of bullying and harassment are challenged, recorded and monitored by Assistant Headteacher.

Students and staff know and understand the ethos of the school and the Mission Statement is high profile – embedded in the way we respect each other. The Year 7 transition programme, Ubuntu, has a module entitled "Everyone Belongs" which also addresses the issues of discrimination and equality.

3.5 Employment: Notre Dame is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from disabled candidates who meet Person Specification requirements; reasonable adjustment would be offered on appointment if required. There are currently a number of disabled members of staff, in teaching and support staff roles, and Team Leaders and Link SLT endeavour to enforce equal opportunities for participation, CPD and advancement. Disabled staff will have a personal Egress Escape Plan. The school receives Access to Work funding where appropriate to enable disabled staff to remain in post through provision of mechanical aids or employment of additional Support staff. The staff absence policy includes a Return to Work interview which would discuss an adjustment of duties. Staff are made aware on appointment and through the Staff Handbook of the procedures for grievance and whistle blowing.

3.6 Leadership & Governance: Promotion of disability equality is a statutory responsibility of the Governing Body and impacts across committee and Senior Leadership roles. Governors committees review and monitor Disability Action Plans, Access Audits and various logs (including bullying and harassment, racial incident, accident, violence). Health & Safety concerns are promptly addressed and risk assessment is part of a regular, monitored cycle. The SENCO is part of the Senior Leadership Team and leads a cross-curricular group to raise awareness, promote training and co-ordination across departments and more informed decision making to meet diversity of needs.

3.7 Community & Lettings: Notre Dame can now offer improved facilities for disabled members of the community, both in terms of access and communications. Parents/carers can visit their children's classrooms in all but some specialist areas of the building and there are toilet and changing facilities for both visitors and community users. Lettings of public areas include the new disabled facilities.

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4. Review and Evaluation

4.1 Student Progress Reviews - progress and achievement for all students is monitored at individual student level and formally discussed with the students and their parents/cares at Academic Tutoring sessions. Special Needs students have Individual Education Plans which are agreed annually and subject to on-going review.

4.2 Curriculum Subject reviews – departments report on progress and achievement of students with all students as well as reporting on SEN students.

4.3 Premises and facilities – progress on the Disability Access Plan and Access Audit plan is reviewed annually by the Governors Premises committee.

4.4 Staff – Governors approve each new appointment or promotion and new staff are supported through a probationary period by their Line Manager, a staff buddy and an agreed Induction programme. All staff are involved in an annual cycle of Performance Management with their Line Manager, which is moderated by SLT. Staff are frequently asked to review arrangements for events and feedback is used to inform future practice.

Other Relevant policies:

Inclusion statement
Admission

Equal opportunities
Behaviour Management Learning Support

Action against Bullying

By order of the Governing Body of Notre Dame R C School

Policy first adopted by Governors Ethos Committee: October 2009

Review Term: 3 Yearly

Review Date: 1st May 2013 Signed Chair of Ethos

Review Date: 4th May 2016 Signed Chair of Ethos

Review Date: 8th May 2019 Signed Chair of Governors

Next Review: May 2022