

# West Berkshire Council Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy 2024-2029 Innovation in SEND



Supporting Children and Young People  
who have Special Educational Needs  
and/or disabilities (SEND) and those  
who are vulnerable



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# Foreword

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We are pleased to introduce West Berkshire's Children and Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy (2024-2029).

Our commitment is to ensure all children, regardless of their needs or vulnerabilities, receive the best possible start in life. This policy promotes inclusive, supportive and equitable environments, enabling every child and young person in our community to reach their full potential.

Our strongest communities are those where no one is left behind. This policy emphasises collaboration between schools, parents/carers, professionals and children & young people to create an inclusive system where the needs of children and young people with SEND, and those who are vulnerable, are prioritised with understanding, respect and quality provision.

Fostering a culture of inclusion, we aim to ensure all children and young people feel valued and supported. This means not just

meeting our statutory obligations but ensuring that our schools and support systems are equipped with the necessary resources to provide tailored, high-quality educational experiences.

Our approach is based on core principles: collaboration, early intervention, person-centred planning and supporting children and young people within their local communities.

We are confident this policy will provide a strong framework for enhancing the experiences of children and young people with SEND, and those who are vulnerable. It also builds on the priorities within the West Berkshire Council Strategy (2023-2027) and the SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029).

We encourage all stakeholders to actively engage and work together to bring this vision to life.



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## Executive Summary

West Berkshire's Children and Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy (2024-2029) sets out our vision and commitment to ensuring that every child and young person, regardless of their SEND needs or vulnerabilities, receives high quality support and opportunities to thrive within an inclusive community. The policy aligns with the broader aims of the West Berkshire Council Strategy (2023-2027) and the SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029).

Our approach centres on creating environments where all children and young people feel valued, supported and empowered to reach their full potential. This policy is built on principles of collaboration, early intervention and person-centred planning, focussing on working with schools, parents/carers and professionals to ensure a coordinated response to SEND needs.

The key priorities in this policy are:

- Priority 1: Increase access to the curriculum
- Priority 2: Increase access to the physical environment
- Priority 3: Increase access to information
- Priority 4: Admissions and fair access to education

There are also a set of enablers to support us in delivering the policy. These are:

- To fund accessibility
- To ensure effective use of resources
- To monitor and review

This policy reflects West Berkshire's dedication to creating an inclusive education system where every child and young person can succeed. We aim to reduce barriers to learning and ensure equitable access to education for all children and young people with SEND and those who are vulnerable.

# What do we mean by disability?

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## Equality Act (2010)

According to the definition of Disability under the Equality Act 2010, a person is disabled if they have:

***'A physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to do normal day to day activities'.***

This definition provides a low threshold. The clear starting point in the statutory guidance is that disability means ***'limitations going beyond the normal differences in ability which may exist among people'***.

***'Substantial'*** means more than minor or trivial. Substantial adverse effects can be determined by looking at the effects on a person with the impairment, comparing those to a person without the impairment, to judge if the difference between the two is more than minor or trivial.

***'Long term'*** means the impairment has existed for at least 12 months or is likely to do so.

***'Normal day to day activities'*** could be determined by reference to the illustrative non-exhaustive list of factors in pages 47-51 of the statutory guidance relating to the Equality Act 2010. Study and education related activities are included in the meaning ***'day to day'*** activities.

The definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

It is not restricted to children and young people with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP). Children and young people with long term health conditions do not necessarily have Special Educational Needs (SEN), but there is an 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.

## SEND Code of Practice (2015)

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 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 significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others 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'.***

It also states that:

***'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'.***

# What the Council and schools must do for children and young people with SEND

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## Why do we need an Accessibility Policy?

Under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities are **required by law** to have an Accessibility Policy for the schools for which they are responsible i.e. local authority maintained schools. Schedule 10 sets out what must be included in the policy including steps being taken to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum.
- Improve the physical environment of the schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services offered.
- Make information more accessible for children and young people with disabilities.
- To ensure that admissions processes to schools and other education providers are fair and enable pupils with SEND to access high quality provision that meets their needs.

Unlike the rest of the Equality Act which has a focus on equal treatment, the sections relating to disability are different and recognise that a person with a disability may have to be treated more favourably than someone who does not, in order to avoid substantial disadvantage.

The Equality Act 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** protect disabled pupils from discrimination and harassment and encourage good relations between disabled and non-disabled peers.
- They **must** make reasonable adjustments, including providing aids, adaptations,

and services, to make sure that pupils with disabilities are not put at substantial disadvantage.

## What are reasonable Adjustments?

All pupils should be helped to fulfil their potential. Reasonable adjustments can help to level the playing field by minimising disadvantages that pupils with disabilities might face compared with their peers.

Reasonable adjustments are changes which organisations and people providing services, must make if someone's physical or mental disability puts them at a disadvantage compared to others who aren't disabled.

This is separate to the requirements related to physical changes which make a building accessible e.g. providing a disabled toilet.

It means schools have a legal obligation under the Equality Act to support pupils who are disabled with reasonable adjustments, making sure they can benefit from what the school offers in the same way as a pupil who isn't disabled.

Schools should think about how all aspects of the school day could be adjusted to meet the needs of the disabled child, including attendance and behaviour, so that everyone is set high expectations and feels they belong in the school community.

Treating disabled pupils equally, might mean doing things differently for them. A couple of examples of reasonable adjustments are:

- A pupil with a visual impairment is seated at the back of the classroom to accommodate their field of vision.
- A pupil with Dyslexia who struggles to write on white paper uses a different coloured paper.

## Pupils with medical conditions

Schools should implement the Statutory Guidance 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions: [Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England \(December 2015\)](#)'.

## SEN Information Reports

Schools must publish a SEN Information Report about their provision and support for children and young people with SEND.

The information to be included in the SEN Information Report is set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 Schedule 1](#).

The SEN Information Report should be updated annually, with any changes occurring during the year being updated as soon as possible.

Schools should publish this information on their school website so that young people, parents/carers/practitioners/professionals can find the information easily.

## School Accessibility Plans

All schools are required to have an Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Plan should be included as part of the SEN Information Report (SEND Code of Practice: 0.25, 6.79).

West Berkshire Council would like to see all schools and academies within the district publish their Accessibility Plans on their website and have a link to it in their SEN Information Report which **must** be published on their website.

OFSTED may request a school's accessibility plan as part of inspection evidence gathering.

## Auxiliary Aids & Services

In September 2012, the duty to provide auxiliary aids and services, including specialist equipment which could include laptops and tablets, was extended to include schools. This places schools and other education providers under a duty to provide aids and services where it is reasonable and where it would prevent a disabled pupil being put at substantial disadvantage compared to his, or her, non-disabled peers.

Examples of auxiliary aids include:

- Coloured overlays
- Pen grips
- Adapted physical education equipment
- Adapted keyboards
- Computer software

# Who is this policy for?

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## Audience

The Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy 2024-29 applies to children and young people with additional needs and disabilities who are currently attending maintained schools. It provides guidance and is a reference point from which to inform a school's accessibility plan and to develop individual Support and Review Plans (SAPs) that are co-produced with pupils, parents, carers and educational professionals.

The Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy sets out how West Berkshire Council intends to support schools and settings to increase inclusion of children and young people with SEND, for which it is the responsible body. All schools and settings should have an Accessibility Plan and there is an expectation that the Accessibility Plans are responsive to the priorities which are set out in this policy.

## Academies

This policy is also relevant to academies, free schools and other educational settings which are not maintained by West Berkshire Council. All schools have a statutory duty to produce and publish a school Accessibility Plan.

The Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy should be used alongside national guidelines for accessibility and will be reviewed annually to ensure it reflects any changes in national policy and guidelines.

Many of the supporting arrangements made by the Local Authority will also benefit disabled children and young people attending academies and free schools within the district.

## Early Years & Further Education

Early Years settings and Further Education (FE) colleges are not required to hold an Accessibility Plan however, it is recommended best practice as Early Years Settings and FE colleges do have to make reasonable adjustments for children and young people with disabilities.





# Our Approach

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The ambitions for West Berkshire are set out within the [Council Strategy 2023-2027](#) and the [SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029](#).

In West Berkshire, we believe that Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is everyone’s business, which means that everyone has a key role to play to ensure that children and young people with SEND, and their families receive the support they need. Our vision for what we would like SEND Services to look like in West Berkshire is:

***Children with SEND receive the right support, adjustments, and interventions, at the right time, to thrive in childhood and to prepare well for adulthood (SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029)***

**The purpose of the Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy is to explain how the Local Authority will support maintained schools to:**

- Improve access to the curriculum for disabled children and young people.
- Improve the physical environment of schools to increase access for disabled children and young people.
- Make written information more accessible to disabled children and young people by providing it in a range of different ways.

## Our Approach:

Co-production with children, young people & families

Early Help & Prevention

Maximising independence for children and young people with SEND

Person-centred & trauma informed approaches

A joined-up approach to meeting children and young people’s needs

Supporting families as close as possible to where they live

# Our Priorities & Goals:

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The priorities & goals of the Children & Young People with SEND Accessibility Policy:

## **Priority 1: Increase Access to the Curriculum**

### **The Local Authority Will:**

- Provide a Local Offer of services and provision that is available to children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Offer continuing professional development opportunities to schools to support, and enhance, the understanding of accessibility.
- Provide opportunities for SENCOs to regularly meet, share good practice and keep up to date with new developments.
- Provide an outreach service to enable mainstream schools to access support and advice so they can better support children with disabilities.
- Ensure Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are specific and effective.
- Encourage liaison between early years settings and primary, secondary schools and colleges to ensure good quality transition and better outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Jointly fund specialist equipment for individual children in collaboration with health.
- Encourage high aspirations for the most vulnerable learners.

### **Schools Will:**

- Adhere to national and local guidance on meeting the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 about SEND.
- Implement strategies to improve curriculum access, publishing these in their Accessibility Plan.
- Plan for, differentiate and teach children and young people with SEND through a range of interventions and teaching strategies.
- Focus on delivering the curriculum through Quality First Teaching (QFT) and, where appropriate, catch-up programmes and targeted support for vulnerable groups.
- Establish effective ways of assessing and monitoring the progress of vulnerable groups.
- Ensure there is effective support for transition for children and young people with SEND.
- Apply funding appropriately to ensure vulnerable groups are not disadvantaged in comparison to non-vulnerable groups.
- Provide effective professional development for staff and governors.
- Involve parents/carers in decision making, keeping them informed of their child's progress.

**Priority 2:  
Increase  
Access to  
the Physical  
Environment**

**The Local Authority Will:**

- Plan new buildings and significant extensions or adaptations that comply with accessibility requirements
- Consider joint funding for Capital Projects for accessibility.
- Ensure that children and young people with physical or sensory impairments or complex medical conditions have access to the necessary support.
- Ensure a joined-up approach between schools, admissions teams and other relevant services to address individual needs.
- Make sure EHCPs are specific about the adaptations required to make school environments accessible for children and young people with disabilities.

**Schools Will:**

- Keep the physical accessibility of the school building under review and make timely arrangements to accommodate access.
- Include improvements that increase access to the physical environment in an Accessibility Plan that is published on the school website.
- Comply with the anticipatory duties as set by the Equality Act 2010.
- Respond to the expectations set out in local and national guidance on meeting the Equality Act 2010 and Children and Families Act 2014 about SEND.
- Undertake improvement projects in collaboration with property surveyors ensuring compliance with building regulations and health and safety standards.
- Apply advice from audits conducted by professionals e.g. Occupational Therapists.
- Conduct Risk Assessments for school trips, extracurricular activities, and other relevant areas, to ensure the safety and accessibility for children and young people with mobility, sensory or medical needs.

**Priority 3:  
Increase  
Access to  
Information**

**The Local Authority Will:**

- Offer training to Governors on Accessibility Plan requirements and the importance of increasing access to information.
- Provide information to children and young people and their families in formats which are accessible.
- Provide advice to schools and maintained settings from centrally retained specialist teaching and advice services about how best to support children and young people with accessing information e.g. Learning Support Services.
- Make sure any new buildings or extensions are appropriately signed in line with accessibility and health and safety requirements.

**Schools Will:**

- Include improvements that increase access to information for disabled children and young people in their Accessibility Plan which will be published on their school website.
- Proactively research, and use, a range of communication technologies, seeking advice from professionals when necessary.
- Monitor and review the skills and expertise of staff to support children and young people with disabilities.
- Involve children, young people and their families in decision making processes regarding the accessibility of information.
- Link to West Berkshire Council's Local Offer website from the school's website.

<b>Priority 4: Admissions and Fair Access to Education</b>	<b>The Local Authority Will:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a centralised online admissions portal that streamlines the application process.</li> <li>• Publish clear information on the Local Offer on the differences in processes when applying for a school place with, and without an EHCP.</li> </ul>	<b>Schools Will:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly communicate their admissions criteria and procedures on their website.</li> <li>• Actively engage with communities by hosting open evenings etc.</li> <li>• Support families through the school application process, if required, e.g. support with filling out forms etc.</li> </ul>
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## Enabling the delivery of our priorities:

To enable the delivery of our priorities, the Local Authority and Schools are responsible for:

<b>Fund Accessibility</b>	<b>Funding to support this accessibility policy is available through a variety of routes.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Authority will ensure that schools have the necessary resources and will provide additional funding, or support, when necessary for high-cost adaptations e.g. via Element 3 (top up) funding or in conjunction with health partners for some items of technology and specialist equipment.</li> <li>• Schools are responsible for utilising their delegated budgets effectively to cover the costs related to improving accessibility e.g. for the provision of learning aids.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure Effective use of Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Authority will provide guidance and support to schools on the best use of resources, ensuring that spending aligns with broader accessibility objectives and legal requirements.</li> <li>• Schools are expected to strategically plan and prioritise spending to improve accessibility, ensuring that resources are used effectively to benefit students with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring &amp; Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Authority will monitor schools' progress and compliance with Accessibility Plans, offering feedback and support to ensure continuous improvement.</li> <li>• The Local Authority will review this Accessibility Policy annually to ensure it reflects any changes in national policy and guidelines.</li> <li>• Schools must regularly review and update their Accessibility Plans, monitoring the effectiveness of implemented strategies and adjusting as needed.</li> </ul>



## Related Information

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For further details on the relevant strategies and legislative frameworks, please refer to the links provided below.

[The Equality Act 2010](#)

[The Equality Act 2010 Schedule 10](#)

[The Children and Families Act 2014](#)

[The SEND Code of Practice 2015](#)

[The Reasonable Adjustment Duty](#)

[Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England \(December 2015\)](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 Schedule 1](#)

[West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-27](#)

[West Berkshire Council SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29](#)

# Glossary

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Abbreviation	Word(s)	Meaning
-	<b>Academy</b>	A type of school in England that is funded by the government but runs independently from the local council.
-	<b>Accessibility Plan</b>	A plan that outlines how schools will improve access for students with disabilities, making sure everyone can use the school facilities and access lessons and activities.
-	<b>Auxiliary Aids</b>	Tools or services such as hearing aids, or software, that help students with disabilities participate fully in school activities.
<b>CYP</b>	<b>Children and young people</b>	The children and young people being thought about.
<b>EHCP</b>	<b>Education, Health &amp; Care Plan</b>	A plan which details the Education, Health and Social Care support provided to a child or young person with SEND.
-	<b>Maintained School</b>	A school that is funded and controlled by the local council and must follow the national curriculum.
	<b>Policy</b>	A plan, or set of guidelines, that explains how decisions are made or actions carried out
-	<b>Reasonable Adjustments</b>	Changes, or adaptations, made by a school to help students with disabilities access education and participate fully e.g. by modifying the layout of the classroom
-	<b>SEN Information Report</b>	A document which explains how schools support students with SEND.
<b>SEND</b>	<b>Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities</b>	A learning difficulty or disability which requires special educational provision to be made for a child or young person.



We are committed to being accessible to everyone. If you require this document in an alternative format or translation, please call the SEN and Disabled Children's Team on Telephone 01635 551111.

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