



POLICY DOCUMENT

S26

**A Plan for Increasing Accessibility
to Pupils with Additional Educational Needs or Disabilities (AEND)
1st April 2021 – 31st March 2024**

Policy

The School will satisfy and where possible exceed its duties as required by the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 in respect of making all reasonable adjustments, including auxiliary aids and services, in respect of current and prospective pupils in relation to their AEN and disability. Particularly, the school will where possible:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils (including those with learning difficulties) can participate in the school's curriculum
- improve the provision to disabled pupils of information which is already in writing for pupils who are not disabled
- improve the physical environment of the school in order to increase the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education offered by the school

Background

Westminster Abbey Choir School is a preparatory school that exists to educate the choristers of Westminster Abbey and is of necessity selective in relation to the admission of pupils. We aim to offer the highest quality of teaching and learning and to support all pupils in the pursuit of academic and personal excellence. We have high expectations of all our pupils and strive to ensure that each and every pupil can take part in the whole school curriculum. We value the diversity of our school community and appreciate the contribution that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can bring to school life.

Admissions

The admissions policy and literature are to be kept under regular review to enable parents more easily to inform the school of the nature of any SEN or disability which may affect a pupil or guardian, so that the School can consider how best specific help or allowances may be given.

Physical lay-out of the school and its boarding facilities

The School continues to be acutely aware of the constraints of a building that is constructed on six floors and has flights of steps to all entrances. The difficulties are exacerbated by the nature of planning constraints on a listed building within a particularly sensitive area. Ways of managing the accessibility for those with disabilities are regularly considered and the following key areas identified:

- Access to the School. Alternative access could be provided for a physically disabled pupil via Great Smith Street with the installation of a chair lift. This option will be considered when budgets allow.
- Access to the internal lift through the narrow lift door. It was noted that this will prove difficult for standard wheelchair access. The replacement of the lift system would be prohibitively expensive. In the short term, a wheelchair small enough to fit the door could be made available if a disabled pupil were admitted. In the long term, when the lift system is renewed, the requirements of disabled access will be considered.
- Access to interview room facilities (for parents). It was noted that the present arrangements for interview facilities are universally unhelpful. The Committee room in 20 Dean's Yard has been identified as a meeting space that can be accessed by those needing disabled access.
- Access to medical facilities. It is noted that despite the surgery being situated on a floor without access by lift, facilities for medical examinations can be available in alternative accommodation for disabled and non-disabled pupils alike. Were a disabled pupil to be admitted this could immediately be altered.
- Access to music practice facilities. There is no need for pupils to use the top floor of the building (above lift level) for music practice or tuition. Alternative facilities are available in the Study Room and the Library.
- Access to the Abbey and its practice facilities. Access could be provided via the Abbey's existing disabled routes. The need to take part in processions: it was noted that this is an important part of a chorister's duties and often involves singing in procession. In the event of a boy being able to sing adequately from a wheelchair consideration would be given to the most satisfactory manner in which he could be included in the ceremony.
- Availability of lavatories that could be suitable for disabled access. It was noted that the lavatory on the lower ground floor, opposite the staff common room can easily be converted for disabled access. Handrails would be installed immediately the need arose.
- The width of doors and available turning circles would need to be assessed and adjusted where practicable.

Education

The School considers the difficulties of "access" to the education generally for specified types of disability. Fundamentally, it acknowledges that the demands of singing in a professional choir of international repute with an ever-changing repertoire require very acute senses of intellect, hearing and sight, and boys are selected on their ability to perform to the highest standards. However, the following has been noted:

- Sight impaired pupils who may be able to sing satisfactorily might need additional aural coaching from a member of the music staff. Alternatively, consideration would be given to the provision of Braille copies or audiotapes of music and textbooks where this is practicable. On occasion the issue might be that lighting levels need to be adjusted to enable a boy to read easily: this adjustment can and in the past has been made in response to individually assessed needs. The School employs a learning support teacher who would be able to assist and advise.

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- It is very unlikely that a pupil with hearing impairment could function as a chorister. Such impairment that was so minor as to make it possible for the pupil to sing satisfactorily would be unlikely to require further support within the school.
 - Pupils with specific learning difficulties are helped by a learning support teacher who advises about suitable remedial programmes in mainstream and music lessons.
 - The provision of 24-hour emergency medical cover enables pupils with medical disabilities to receive the individual care they need.
 - Pupils with physical or other health issues which meet the legal definition of 'disability' would be assessed by the school's Medical Officer and where budgets allow, additional support would be considered.

Recreational and Sporting Activities

The School has considered the difficulties of "access" to recreational and sporting activities and noted the following:

- There are considerable physical difficulties in providing suitable facilities for pupils with a disability. Foremost amongst these is a lack of space within the school grounds. Suitable activities could be sought outside the school that are available to disabled and non-disabled pupils alike where the budget allows and where existing staffing could adequately and safely supervise them. The School would consider such provision if and when the need arose.
- In the long term, when a new minibus is needed, consideration will be given to the financial feasibility of purchasing one with disabled access.

Welfare

The School has considered the mechanism for dealing with the welfare of a disabled pupil and considers that all existing procedures are equally relevant to disabled and non-disabled pupils.

Action Plan

Current restriction	Proposed modification	Timescale
Curriculum		
Improve access to curriculum for all pupils including those with SEND.	Increase the number of laptops to be allocated for use by pupils with SEND. Develop use of 'cloud' for file sharing and storage.	September 2022
Continue to augment the provision of specialist provision for those with AEN	Already in place, modify the number of hours of specialist provision with our AEN specialist dependent on needs of cohort	ongoing
Written information		
Height of noticeboards	Adjust height or install new boards as required	assessment of pupils on admission
Written documents in normal print size	Audio, Braille or large print as required; adjustment to lighting conditions.	assessment of pupils on admission
Physical Environment		
Evacuation from the building in the event of an emergency by pupils or staff with physical disabilities	Conduct a survey to determine the location and number of evacuation chairs that would be required Prepare a budget for the purchase of chairs and associated training.	August 2022
Access to building requires navigation of stairs	Conduct a survey of the rear (Great Smith Street) and prepare a budget for works.	August 2022
Internal lift to all floors is small	Conduct a survey when the lift is due for replacement to determine practicality of enlarging the internal dimensions	August 2023 Or later if not required
School minibus does not have a facility for wheelchair access	Consider a model with wheelchair access when replacing current vehicle	August 2024