

# Ysgol Maesydderwen



## Schools Service Accessibility Strategy 2018-21

Type: Local Authority

| Reviewed / Adopted On | Signed  | Next Review      |
|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| 9/4/19                |   | Spring Term 2022 |



# Schools Service Accessibility Strategy 2018 – 2021

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***Date approved: September 2018***

***Next review date: August 2019***

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## FOREWORD

This strategy has been produced to provide the measure by which developments and current actions towards Inclusive Learning<sup>1</sup> are judged with regard to the ability of individual learners with additional needs and disabilities to achieve their full learning potential.

The key variables in determining inclusion are curriculum access, ability and capacity of staff, the views of parents and carers, the physical environment, the impact of other learners in the school community and the overall school culture.

This strategy focuses on the physical environment and access to the curriculum, and the relationship between school staff and Local Authority teams including planning, property services, equalities officers and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) team, in consultation and involvement with families and individual learners.

It also addresses the key principles of equality that schools or educational settings must adhere to which, when in place, provide a key environmental platform on which inclusive learning can be delivered.

We all want the best for our children and young people and this strategy contributes to an overall inclusive learning environment, in which all learners feel equally valued.

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis; should you have any comments please feel free to feedback to Rosie Davies, Schools Service Policy Officer – [rosie.davies@powys.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.davies@powys.gov.uk)



**Myfanwy Alexander, Cabinet Member for Learning and Welsh Language**

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusive learning is the result of effective teaching practice, an adapted learning environment and teaching approaches which ensure that all children are included, engaged and supported. **Inclusive Learning Children with disabilities and difficulties in learning** September 2014 Catherine Howgego, Susie Miles & Juliette Myers



## Schools Service Accessibility Strategy 2018-2021

### 1. Introduction

The Local Authority has a duty to produce an accessibility strategy for the schools it is responsible for, to address “*improving the physical environments of schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled learners are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools*” [Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010).

### 2. Vision and Scope

Powys has the responsibility for every child and young person aged 0-25 attending a school or educational setting to achieve the best learning outcomes and develop the most rewarding personal and social relationships possible through the facilitation of the environment in which they learn.

This standard reflects the aspirations of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 which seeks to ensure that disabled learners in all settings have the best opportunities and support so that as far as possible they succeed in education and their careers, live as independently and as healthily as possible and be active members of their communities.

Powys believes that parents, carers, schools, the local authority and partners should work together to ensure opportunities are available to enable every child and young person to strive for the highest aspirations, and to ensure that any barriers to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude are removed wherever possible.

Activities the Authority commits to in order to deliver inclusion and inclusive learning include:

- ✓ Developing a culture, policies and practice in order to include all learners through person-centred thinking and action;
- ✓ Ensuring that staff are committed to and supported to engage in professional development, with a continued focus on inclusive outcomes and professional challenge;
- ✓ Embedding in schools and educational settings respect for difference and a commitment to building friendships and communities that support every child and young person;
- ✓ Delivering excellence, choice, flexible and appropriate support, and support that facilitates the inclusion of the views and self-determination of learners;
- ✓ Prioritising the importance of equality of access through policies and position statements, making explicit the need and the actions of a particular service or provision to ensure there is accessibility for all.



### 3. Areas covered by the Strategy

#### 3.1 Schools and Learning (including School Transformation)

This includes a physical environment dimension and access to the curriculum for the following areas:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Sensory and Physical
- Social and Emotional Needs

The Authority's **position statement** on accessibility in schools and learning is attached at **Appendix A**.

To support schools in assessing their physical environment, the Authority has developed a **self-audit toolkit**. This looks at areas within the school and can be used to evaluate for accessibility, whether this is against physical, sensory or cognitive ability.

#### 3.2 Admissions

The Authority will ensure a co-ordinated response on being notified of a child or young person with a physical or sensory disability moving to one of its schools and will ensure that any child or young person with such a disability is able to attend a suitable school within a reasonable distance from the home.

Where adaptations are required to enable a child or young person to attend the nearest suitable school, to ensure that they are able to access learning alongside their peers the Authority will involve all parties as soon as notification of admission is received, for example parents/carers, Educational Psychology Service, medical practitioners, other LAs.

The Authority's **Admissions Statement** is attached at **Appendix B**. The Information for Parents Booklet, which gives general information about the school admission policy, can be found on the Authority's website [here](#)

#### 3.3 Home to School Transport

The Authority's Home to School/College Transport Policy details the support available for those of statutory school age and post-16 learners who, due to their disability, have specific transport requirements. The key outcomes are:

- to ensure all those travelling to and from school do so in the most independent and safe way possible, supported by individual Travel Care Plans and the school's annual review process
- that learners arrive at school ready to learn
- that the provision for those eligible is a reasonable use of public expenditure

The Home to School/College Transport Policy is available [here](#)

### 3.4 Partnership with Parents and Carers

Key to success in planning and delivering support to learners with disabilities is close working and consultation with parents and carers. In most cases learners can also participate, contribute and share decision-making with regard to the planning and delivery of support to ensure they are able to be fully involved within their school.

The Authority's Additional Learning Needs team works with parents and carers to ensure effective planning and progress to make sure that the child/young person's present and future school is accessible. The expertise of parents and young people will be recognised and valued in the planning and delivery process of any adaptations necessary. When physical alterations are required, these will be done in a timely manner. Minor works can usually be undertaken within a matter of months, but complex works, or where additional permissions are required, can take up to three years, including the planning and feasibility process. Individual circumstances are considered on a case by case basis and the Authority therefore values the input from families and schools in this process to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress.

In addition, Powys commissions SNAP Cymru to provide independent advice and guidance for parents/carers with regard to Additional Learning Needs and disabilities.

### 3.5 Access to Information and Communication

The Authority, working with its ALN, admissions, property and health and safety teams, will ensure that information available through its public website, as well as in text-based publications, is clear and concise to ensure it is accessible to as many as possible.

Any questionnaires or forms will be scrutinised to ensure that the right information is sought and in a way which maximises the possibility of obtaining the information needed.

Any notes of meetings between officers with or without parents/carers will be available on request.

## 4. Monitoring and Review

This strategy will be monitored by the Schools Service and reviewed annually to check on progress with achieving agreed actions and planned developments.

## 5. Complaints

In all instances, the Authority encourages service users to raise issues early and informally with the relevant body or person. Many issues can be resolved to everyone's satisfaction in this way.

However, the Authority recognises that in certain cases a service user will want to and be entitled to raise a formal complaint.

As this Strategy covers work by both central teams and schools, complaints have to be raised with the correct body.

For complaints which involve central Local Authority officers or services, the Powys County Council corporate complaints process should be used.

For complaints which involve an individual school, the school's complaints procedure should be used. The complaints procedure is available on the school's website or on request from the school.

As this strategy also covers issues related to Statements of SEN, as well as other educational issues, it may be that a different complaints process is appropriate. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive overview of all such processes in this document; Local Authority officers are able to advise how exactly an issue should be dealt with.

## 6. How to get in touch

Schools Service  
Powys County Council  
County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys LD1 5LG

### Telephone

01597 826422

### E-mail / Website

[education@powys.gov.uk](mailto:education@powys.gov.uk)  
[www.powys.gov.uk](http://www.powys.gov.uk)

### Twitter

@cspowys (Welsh)  
@powyscc (Eng)

### Facebook

@cspowys  
@powyscc

### Instagram

@powyscountycouncil

### YouTube

Cyngor Sir Powys County Council



## Local Authority's Schools and Learning Accessibility Statement

### 1. Cognition and Learning

This term refers to learners who:

- have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or dyscalculia (disabilities); and/or
- have a general learning difficulty or delay.

The outcome of these difficulties is that they have Additional Learning Needs and without support will not achieve to their potential.

#### 1.2 Physical environment

The Authority will:

- Provide guidance on the graduated response to need and provide or signpost schools to the appropriate training to support inclusive practice;
- Provide special school provision for those with the severity and complexity of need that makes mainstream provision unsuitable.

Schools will:

Ensure that guidance provided on the graduated response to need is followed. This should be viewed as good practice and may involve specific adaptations to the environment such as the use of symbols around the building as well as learning resources for those with severe and complex needs or a total communication package using both sign vocabulary and symbols.

#### 1.3 Access to the Curriculum

The Authority will:

- Provide advisory teaching teams to support Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators in providing support to class teachers and learners;
- Provide, through the Learning and Inclusion Support Team, training and support for schools to develop their capacity with regard to supporting those with learning difficulties;
- Provide guidance on the graduated response to need and when it is appropriate to move from one level of response to the next;
- Promote person-centred practice in schools.

Schools will:

- Assess and provide the support appropriate to ensure access to text is maximised e.g. coloured overlays, avoiding unnecessarily complex layout of text and/or numbers. Using symbols and signs to maximise communication skills;
- Make examination access arrangements which suits the assessed need;
- Support a learner's self-confidence and growth to become an independent learner;
- Initiate support from outside school such as the Learning and Inclusion Support Team if and when necessary according to monitoring of interventions and the learner's progress;
- Ensure staff are aware of the individual needs of learners through One Page Profiles;
- Support enhanced provision for those whose complexity or severity of need means that full mainstream inclusion is not appropriate.

## 2. Communication and Interaction

This term refers to those learners who have difficulties in both receptive and or expressive language including the social use and understanding of language i.e. Speech, Language and Communication delay (SLCN). Examples are disabilities such as autism and those with social and pragmatic language delay.

### 2.1 Physical environment

The Authority will:

- Be informed of the needs of the school population and reflect the support they may need in design plans for new schools and major refurbishments e.g. early years areas to maximise effective communication in the spaces provided.

Schools will:

- Work with other agencies e.g. speech and language therapy in implementing recommendations, ensuring that a space is available for specific work to be undertaken;
- Ensure that the physical environment maximises opportunities for supported social interaction.

### 2.2 Access to the Curriculum

The Authority will:

- Provide advice and training in association with speech and language therapy to schools to ensure they have the knowledge base to respond to the needs of those with Speech Language and Communication Needs e.g. social stories and Elklan;
- Advocate for the rights of the learner if they are subject to bullying in school on the basis of their disability;
- Promote person-centred practice in schools;
- In the design of new or remodelled schools, ensure that there is recognition of the sensory needs of those with autism;
- Provide guidance on the graduated response to need and when it is appropriate to move from one level of response to the next.



Schools will:

- Ensure that staff are trained in the needs of those with language delay and/or social communication issues;
- Ensure staff are aware of the individual needs of learners through One Page Profiles;
- Be aware of associated conditions such as attachment difficulties and disorder that may also demonstrate poor social communication;
- Provide support to maximise the development and independence of the learner;
- Ensure anti-bullying policies are pro social in their delivery and identify those with Speech Language and Communication Needs as being particularly vulnerable.

### 3. Sensory and Physical

Children and young people with a diagnosed vision and/or hearing loss (by audiology and ophthalmology services) are supported by the Authority's Sensory Support Team of specialist teachers and staff. It is likely that learners with this level of need will have a diagnosed disability.

Children and young people with physical or medical needs may also need support to access the school campus and the curriculum. These needs will have been identified by a medical practitioner and as such the learners may have a recognised disability. These disabilities may be hidden such as diabetes or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Many of these learners will have been known to and supported by the Sensory Impaired Service prior to starting school.

#### 3.1 Physical environment

The Authority will:

- Plan new buildings and major refurbishments in such a way as to facilitate access for learners with a motor, visual and/or hearing impairment;
- Ensure that planning and property services work with sensory support specialists to deliver the most inclusive environment for the available resource;
- Where significant adaptations are needed, through the Authority's multi-agency Adaptations and Disabilities Panel ensure that work is completed on time;
- Ensure that building adaptations are fit for purpose and compliant with building legislation and guidance as a minimum.

Schools will:

- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the learner can access the parts of the school site necessary to access the curriculum and also engage appropriately with friends and others;
- Provide the technological support necessary to facilitate access to the curriculum;
- Ensure the environment is as accessible as possible e.g. highlighting doorways and steps, lighting in general, acoustic measures, keeping corridors clear, ensuring personal evacuation plans are in place;
- Carry out an audit of trip hazards and noise levels;



- Involve learners through person centred practice in measuring the impact of the environment.

### 3.2 Access to the Curriculum

The Authority will:

- Facilitate access of individual learners with visual or hearing needs where appropriate, maximising the efficient use of available resources;
- Provide specialist teaching for those with sensory needs and support to the school for those with physical disabilities;
- Ensure that the learner has the right equipment in place and the school and learner are confident in its use;
- Provide guidance on environmental adaptations for schools in support of individual learners as required.

Schools will:

- Work with other agencies such as medical and social care, to ensure consistency in delivery of health and/or care plans;
- Provide support as necessary to deliver successful independent learning;
- Provide the time and space for the specialist teacher to work with the learner.

## 4. Social and Emotional Needs

Learners may be at risk of emotional vulnerability at any time in their school career if they have been subject to abuse, neglect or trauma. Some may have a medical diagnosis of a disability such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD); Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD); or Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) and will be known to find managing relationships, a school structure and authority difficult, which results in them being vulnerable to exclusion.

### 4.1 Physical Environment

The Authority will:

- In planning and adaptations, working with the school identify a space which could be used to support vulnerable learners;
- Provide enhanced support through the Pupil Referral Unit for certain vulnerable learners unable temporarily to continue in a mainstream environment;
- Provide specialist school provision for those whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools.

Schools will:

- Do their best to identify and secure a place to withdraw to for learners who exhibit challenging behaviour or significant anxiety;
- Ensure as far as is possible that the school site is secure;



- Where possible, provide a flexible learning environment where learners can continue to learn and progress without the demand of the formal classroom.

#### 4.2 Access to the Curriculum

The Authority will:

- Provide training and support for school staff in understanding, assessing and responding to social and emotional needs;
- Help schools identify learners at risk of becoming a NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) at 16 or when they leave school;
- Support schools to engage all learners through events such as careers fairs;
- Provide parent support through Incredible Years for those in Foundation Phase and earlier;
- Ensure that those with a disability are not unfairly discriminated against and that behaviour policies are informed by the Equality Act 2010.

Schools will:

- Assess the underlying causes of the behaviour and any unmet need (e.g. learning or communication difficulty);
- Provide as far as is possible a curriculum that will maximise engagement and listen to the concerns and views of all learners;
- Support vulnerable learners to meet pastoral as well as academic needs;
- Be a constructive part of the team supporting the learner and monitoring their wellbeing;
- Produce individual Behaviour Support Plans and Pastoral Support Plans to ensure the school responds appropriately to the needs of the learner.



## Admissions Statement

When the Authority receives an application for a learner with a disability to attend a mainstream school within the county, the appropriate specialist teams are involved to ensure that a place is allocated in the appropriate suitable school, within a reasonable distance from the home.

In addition to this Admissions Statement, the **Admission Arrangements: Information for Parents** booklet, which gives general information about the school admission policy, can be found on the Authority's website [here](#)

The Authority will respond where a child:

- enters school at Foundation Phase for the first time;
- moves from one school to another within Powys, including from junior/primary to high school;
- moves into Powys from elsewhere.

A child entering a maintained pre-school setting is not covered by this strategy although the Authority is responsible for the commissioning of places and the quality (accessibility) of those settings.

The four pre-school assessment centres as well as other specialist centres and special schools have their admissions agreed through the **Specialist Centre Admissions Panel** and the **ALN (SEN) Statutory Panel** respectively. Further information can be found on Page 20 the **Admission Arrangements: Information for Parents** booklet [here](#)

On being notified the Authority will take the following actions:

- ensure that notification of an admission to a Powys school where a physical or sensory disability exists is immediately referred to the Schools Service ALN Co-ordinator and, for those with a sensory disability, to the Sensory and Physical Support Service;
- work with schools to ensure, through the annual review process, that planning for a move to another school in Powys starts at least two years prior to the planned move;
- assess the needs of the learner with respect to access to the school building and school site;
- discuss with the school what adaptations can be made from within the school's own resources as per their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010;
- agree, if referred through the Disability and Adaptations Panel, the building work or adaptations that need to be completed either prior to or completed after admission;
- commission the work through Heart of Wales Property Services (HOWPS).

The outcomes that the Authority will deliver are:

- the learner is able to access learning alongside his/her peers in either the nearest school to the home or in a school that is within a reasonable distance to the home;



- any reasonable adjustments (including timetabling) to enable the learner to access learning at the nearest school to the home are completed prior to admission, wherever possible;
- any building work is completed before the learner starts school wherever possible or, if continues after admission, does not impede them from safely accessing the curriculum;
- public expenditure is used to best effect to meet the needs of individual learners and to improve the building stock in ownership of Powys County Council.

It may not be possible for the nearest school to be made ready for the learner prior to the admission date, especially where they have moved into the Authority's area at short notice. In these cases the learner will be offered a place at the nearest accessible school (with transport provided) and a decision made in discussion with the parents/carers as to whether, if the nearest school was made accessible, the learner would want to move to that school.

Aspects of admissions for those with statements of Special Educational Needs currently follow the SEN Code of Practice 2002. This will be subject to amendment in 2019 in line with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

Others with special educational needs at School Action and School Action Plus will be supported through the school's resources. The Authority provides support through the Learning Inclusion Support Team (LIST), the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the Sensory and Physical Support Service. Their role is to work with schools to ensure access to the curriculum is possible and learners make progress according to their expected level.

## Staffing

Staffing to support the learner to become fully integrated into the life of the school is based on an assessment of his/her needs and will be provided by the school in recognition of their special educational or medical need.