

How can an accessibility plan be developed?

An accessibility plan can be developed by taking the following steps:

INFORMATION GATHERING

- Set up an accessibility planning working group or committee
- Seek the views of stakeholders
- Gather and analyse information
- Consider other policies
- Carry out an accessibility audit

ACTION PLAN

Take each issue and identify:

- Short, medium-, and long-term targets
- Who is responsible for implementing the action
- When the action will be completed
- How it will be monitored and evaluated
- Any costs involved/ sources of funding
- Training needs related to the targets
- Clear success criteria

IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW AND REVISE

- Once the plan has been implemented, monitor and review the objectives at least annually
- Consider the impact of accessibility in other school policies
- Make the written report available from the school's office/website
- Revise objectives at least once every three years, or earlier if necessary to inform the priorities for the next accessibility plan

Where does the accessibility plan fit within school policies and procedures?

Accessibility planning should not be just a standalone project but incorporated into a wider and well-developed policy environment aimed at including and developing pupils with a disability to their full potential.

Schools may wish to dovetail their accessibility plan so that it coincides with or is a separate component within the school's development plan, which is a strategic plan for making school improvements.



If a pupil with a disability or their parent is unhappy with the accessibility plan, what can they do?

- Speak to the principal or the responsible body for the school; or
- Follow the school's complaints procedure; or
- Contact the Dispute Avoidance & Resolution Service (Tel: 028 9072 606); or
- Contact the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (Tel: 028 9072 4847).



Accessibility Planning:

Increasing the access to education for pupils with a disability



A summary guide

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What is an accessibility plan?

Article 18 of SENDO places a duty on schools to prepare a written accessibility plan to show how the responsible body plan, over a prescribed period of time to:

- a) increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's **curriculum**;
- b) improve the **physical environment** of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by the school; and
- c) improve the delivery to disabled pupils
 - (i). within a reasonable time, and
 - (ii). in ways which are determined after taking account of their disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents, of **information** which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

The responsible body for the school must have regard to the need to:

- Allocate resources for implementing the plan;
- Monitor, review, revise the plan as necessary, include in Annual Report; and
- Make a copy of the plan available if requested by DE, ETI and others.

Why is an accessibility plan important?

An accessibility plan is an important way of showing how the responsible body for the school anticipates and responds to its duty to avoid discrimination against pupils because of disability.

It outlines the steps that are reasonable to take within the school context to avoid treating both current and prospective pupils with a disability less favourably and to ensure that they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled pupils (unless it can be shown that this can be justified), in accessing education or associated services provided for, or offered to, pupils at that school by the responsible body.



What is a 'reasonable' adjustment?

There is no standard definition of what 'reasonable' means. It will depend very much on the context of the individual school setting, its own resources as well as the needs of disabled and non-disabled pupils.

The Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools (ECNI, 2006) provides useful examples of reasonable adjustments.

What is an example of a reasonable adjustment?

Examples of reasonable adjustments can include:

Curriculum: classroom organisation, changes to teaching and learning arrangements, accessible venues and transport for school trips, writing slopes and pencil grips, timetabling arrangements, keyboard skills instead of handwriting.

Physical environment: adjustable lighting and paint schemes with good colour contrast, lifts, ramps, stair treads, parking spaces near entrance, accessible toilets, minimising clutter in rooms, keeping pathways free from leaves.

Information: Braille, large print, audio format, digital formats, pictorial representation, easy read versions.

Who is responsible for creating an accessibility plan?

A whole-school approach is recommended to create an accessibility plan. This helps to gather a range of views and data to identify barriers and to determine solutions that will show how the school plans to increase and improve the extent that pupils with a disability can access all aspects of school life.

