

Townsend Church of England School

Accessibility

This plan has been drawn up in accordance with the planning duty in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), as amended by the SEN and Disability Act (SENDA) and the Equality Act.

Definition

Disability is defined by the Equality Act as, 'A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.'

Context of the strategy

This Accessibility Plan is supported and informed by other school policies and should be read in conjunction with the documents listed below, as together they constitute the school strategy and response and should be considered as part of the school's accessibility planning. Regard should also be given to the school ethos and values outlined in our prospectus and on our website. The 'Respect for All' statement underpins and exemplifies the school philosophy of inclusion and acceptance of all children.

- Equality Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Respect for All Statement
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Well-Being and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Disability Access Information

The School's Context

We are a Voluntary Aided Secondary Church of England School for boys and girls aged from 11 – 16. The school comprises six main building buildings with extensive playing fields constituting a c15 acre site situated on the edge of the Cathedral City of St Albans. Four buildings are of single floor construction, one has two floors and the largest building a mixture of two and three floors. When externally assessed, 48% of the school was deemed as accessible to wheelchairs because of historical construction and existing staircases.

The school has located a number of important facilities on the ground floor to facilitate ease of access:

- The gymnasium
- The swimming pool
- The main hall
- The large canteen*
- The small canteen*
- The post 16 (6th Form) centre*
- The main music rooms
- The English learning area
- The mathematics learning area
- The Design and Technology suite

- Two food and nutrition (food technology) rooms
- Three computer rooms
- The art rooms
- The drama studio
- Six science laboratories
- The four meeting and seminar rooms
- The school office and reception area
- Two student playgrounds
- The school playing fields
- The external covered social area
- The external picnic benches, games tables and table tennis tables
- Two car parking areas
- Three accessibility adapted toilets and four other toilet facilities
- A permanent disability badge parking space with provision for other temporary spaces as required.

* = access via external door with step free access

Townsend Church of England School is an inclusive community in which each person is respected and recognised as of equal value. Our 'Respect for All' statement and our ethos and values statements are expressions of that intent.

In all aspects of the school, the governors and staff are committed to working together to ensure that the school community remains true to the respect for all principle underpinning policies.

Through a series of inter-related policies the school supports disability equality in all aspects of school life for students, staff and visitors. All new policies are examined to ensure consideration of accessibility and equality.

Townsend Church of School wants to be inclusive of any students who are, or maybe in the future, on our roll with physical or sensory impairments, communication difficulties, and learning needs and will seek to addresses each person's unique, intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional or social needs.

Students have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to a range of extra-curricular experiences. Attention is given to resourcing and the development of an appropriate environment to meet the needs of individual students and groups within the school community. The language used in the school community, spoken or written, fosters a positive attitude to each person.

All teachers are teachers of students with additional needs. Teaching those with additional needs is therefore a whole school responsibility. The needs of all students are at the centre of teaching and learning at Townsend. Our Special Educational Needs and Learning Support Policy is based on good practice established over many years and is integral to the schools 'Respect for All' statement.

Parent/carers and students can be sure that Townsend Church of England School is a fully inclusive school that values every member of the school community. We strive always to raise aspirations and attainment of all students in partnership with parents/carers and a range of outside agencies and stakeholders.

The school's Well-Being department includes an Inclusion Coordinator, a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), two Inclusion Managers, two Well-Being Mentors and four Learning Support Assistants (full and part time). The team works collaboratively with all teachers, Directors of Learning (subject and year), Senior Leadership and outside agencies, to meet the learning needs of all students.

Our Well-Being team is established and fully committed to ensuring students are aspirational and are working to unlock personal potential. Learning Support Assistants work with students with Education,

Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) across the curriculum in all years, as well as supporting students and teachers in the classroom. The majority of this support is classroom based, as well as a range of interventions and programmes (including some withdrawal) when needed and appropriate.

The department has a suite of rooms, where we can provide appropriate intervention work, including Extended Literacy and Numeracy Support and host school meetings with parents/carers and students, and those involving external professionals.

The suite of rooms was modified in 2016 to be fully accessible with the creation of a sloped access, an identified wheelchair access route, and the installation of wider access doors. In 2015 the suite of rooms was relocated to the ground floor and moved to refurbish accommodation with access immediately from the main school car park. Dropped kerbs have also been created in 2017 from the car park to facilitate access for wheelchairs and those with limited mobility.

The Well-Being team also supports extra-curriculum clubs to ensure accessibility and runs a Home Study (homework) support programme to support those with additional needs. A member of the Well-Being team is the lead for our extensive Duke of Edinburgh programme that is accessible to all and offered from year 10. Although we are one of the smallest secondary schools in Hertfordshire we are the third largest operator of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The school aims to help all of our students to feel valued, accepted, welcomed, and better equipped to make positive choices and play an active role in society, now and in the future.

The aims of the strategy

- To reduce and eliminate barriers to accessing the curriculum and to full participation in the Townsend School community.
- Compliance with the DDA, SENDA and the Equality Act is consistent with the school's activities, the Equality Policy, and the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy.

Statement of Intent

Townsend Church of England School continues to develop its ability to provide an inclusive and accessible environment for students, staff, parents/carers and members of the wider community. It aims to meet the outcomes that were part of the Children Act and has regard to the general duty to:

- promote equality of opportunity
- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- eliminate disability related harassment
- promote positive attitudes to people with disabilities
- encourage the participation of people with disabilities

The Role of Governors

The SEN and Disability Act extended the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to cover education. The Governing Body has three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage;
- To consider ways to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

Governors further recognise their duty to:

- Not to discriminate against disabled students in its admissions and exclusions policy and provision of education and associated services
- To improve the physical environment of the school to enable disabled students, staff and visitors to take better advantage of the facilities
- To seek ways improve the availability of accessible information to disabled students and visitors

The school will:

- Recognise and value parents/carers knowledge of their child's disability and its effect on his/her ability to carry out normal activities and respects the parents/carers and the student's right to confidentiality
- Provide all students with a broad and balanced curriculum, differentiated and adjusted to meet the needs of individual students
- Set appropriate learning challenges
- Respond to student's diverse learning needs
- Overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of students

We are committed to providing an accessible environment within the existing physical restrictions of the buildings and to value and include all students, staff, parents/carers and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional, or cultural needs.

We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

The School plans, over time, to increase the accessibility of provision for all students, staff, parents/carers and visitors to the school within existing or future resources and acknowledging the physical restrictions of the buildings.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustment wherever this is possible and practicable.

Admissions

Admission rules for Townsend are inclusive and have provision for those with additional needs. Students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Education Needs are able to apply for a place via Hertfordshire County Council who co-ordinate admissions for those with additional needs. The school is subsequently invited to consider the application and advise whether we can meet the student's specific needs. We encourage any parent/carer applying in this way to provide as much current and detailed information with their application. This will allow Hertfordshire County Council and the school to fairly assess its ability to meet their individual needs. The school has a well-established process of transition for students from primary schools into our secondary school as part of the wider transition process. If appropriate the school uses external advisers to inform the reasonable adjustments that could facilitate entry. Recent examples include the visual impairment advisory service, and the hearing impairment advisory service.

Staff Recruitment and the Needs of Existing Staff

Staff recruitment and employment decisions will be made in line with the school's Equalities Policy and the school is committed to ensuring that, within the framework of the law, the school is free from unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender (including gender reassignment), colour, ethnic origin, nationality, age, marital status, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstances, sexual orientation or other relevant distinction or 'protected characteristic'.

The requirements of job applicants and existing members of staff who have, or have had, a temporary or permanent disability will be considered to ensure that whatever reasonable adjustments are possible they are made to allow applicants or staff to enter, or remain in, school employment. Recent examples include: specialist chairs, adapted keyboard, special wrist supported mouse mats, the school website configured to allow for adaptation (including translation and accessibility features such as font size selection).

Where new health needs are identified for existing staff, the appropriate staff are informed and consideration of reasonable adjustment is made to support the staff member and promote their safety and well-being. Examples include adaptation for those who are working prior to maternity leave. Short term mobility needs will be considered and, where necessary, appropriate, and practicable reasonable adjustment and guidance will be given. (eg. room relocation, help to carry resources, parking space allocation)

Interventions in place, planned or considered for future implementation

The strategies and interventions that are currently in place to help make the curriculum accessible are:

- Individual and external funding used for students with an Education Health and Care Plan (or historical Statement of Special Educational Needs)
- Learning Support Assistant deployment generally or in targeted lessons for individual students
- Deployment of the school's dedicated well-being staff to support students
- Intervention or catch-up provision
- Revision opportunities
- Home Study Clubs
- Special software to support learning eg. SAM Learning, MyMaths
- One to one support for individual students as appropriate
- Individual/group withdrawal for literacy and numeracy
- Individual/group withdrawal for behavioural/emotional needs
- Access to Connexions (YC) provision (including individual specialist interviews and independent guidance)
- 6th students providing tutoring/mentoring support for younger students eg. Pop-Up Peers, reading mentors, class helpers, Raise Ambassadors.
- Reduced group sizes for less able students in core subjects as appropriate
- Teaching staff ensure lessons are differentiated
- Reduced timetables for students according to need as appropriate
- Liaison between school and health professionals
- Accessible Specialist Provision as required
- Breakfast Club provision extended and external entrance improved to create a non-stepped access.
- Anti-Bullying/equality scheme extended – including the creation of student Raise Ambassadors.
- Staff moving location during parent/carer consultation meetings to meet face to face with those with a disability access difficulty

Physical adaptations

In 2017

- Many kerbs were dropped to install sloped access – giving access to the large canteen, the small canteen, the main teaching block from the Discovery Centre Courtyard (two entrances adapted), access from the car park to the main reception and to the Inclusion base, and in four other areas to improve mobility access
- Installation of sensory paving to mark road crossings

- Disability access painted on roadway to guide towards the inclusion base
- Higher visibility projector installed in the main hall
- New higher visibility data projectors installed in 10 classrooms
- Lighting improvements in communal areas, corridors, gymnasium, some classrooms and in the school meeting rooms to improved visibility
- Higher visibility speed control ramps installed at both entrances in addition to existing speed control measures
- External lighting significantly upgraded
- Prospective parent/carer tour adapted to facilitate wheelchair participation

In 2016

- Contrasting (yellow) markings added to obstructions eg. projecting walls, staircases protruding into access space
- Contrasting edges added to the stairs leading to the Discovery Independent Learning Centre and Library
- Yellow high visibility paint added to the edges of stairs to the languages and music classrooms
- Wider access doors installed for the Inclusion base rooms
- Clearer signposting installed on the school site
- Sloped entrances installed for the main music suite
- Disabled accessible parking bay created (with provision for additional temporary parking spaces to be arranged as required)
- Hearing loop recommissioned in the main hall
- Further lighting improvements in communal areas and refurbished areas, corridors, and some classrooms to improved visibility
- School website adapted to allow for accessibility personalisation eg. font size adjustment, colour contrasts, photograph hover descriptions
- Prospectus and Annual Booklet available in large print format on request
- Supplemental application form adapted to offer help to complete the form and its availability in a large format
- Laptops and tablets available in the inclusion base
- Third disability/accessibility toilet created
- Breakfast Club – student entrance improved to create a non-stepped access
- Kerbs marked in high visibility paint
- Student road crossings given tactile warning/alert indicators on the pavements

Future Planning considerations

It is widely acknowledged that the school has made significant adaptations to facilitate greater accessibility over the last few years. The text and lists provided above illustrate that this is a proactive institution that constantly reviews its provision and takes every opportunity to improve accessibility as opportunities arise. However, there is always more that can be achieved as resources become available and future plans include:-

- Additional dropped kerbs and step free access
- Contrast edging added to more steps
- Enhancements to the school website to further increase accessibility
- Improving further school signage externally and internally
- Continuing to lobby for funding for lifts to be installed to the Discovery Centre with a bridge across to the Humanities corridor – creating greater accessibility to two important areas of the school
- Lift access to the second and third floors of the original 1960s school building

- Removing stepped access to the internal Post 16 entrance as funding allows. (Current estimates are prohibitively expensive)
- Removing stepped internal access to the small and large canteens. (Current estimates are prohibitively expensive)
- Further improvements to internal corridor and communal areas lighting
- Provision of greater and more flexible technology to the inclusion centre ie. laptops and tablets and adaptive software and equipment
- Installation of more new brighter classroom data projectors
- Developing further the use of external agencies and advisers – particularly those working with our inclusion area.
- Continued review of the appropriateness of our curriculum provision
- Continued improvements to classroom teaching to enhance further Future Planning Considerations with student learning and increasing curriculum accessibility

To aid our future planning we restate that

- We are committed to providing an accessible environment within the existing physical restrictions of the buildings and to value and include all students, staff, parents/carers and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional, or cultural needs.
- We remain committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and will continue to develop a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion for current and future students, staff, parents/carers and visitors.
- The School will continue to plan, over time, to increase the accessibility of provision for all students, staff, parents/carers and visitors to the school within existing or future resources and acknowledging the existing physical restrictions of the buildings.
- We remain committed to making reasonable adjustment wherever this is possible, practicable and affordable.

Document availability

The school makes its Accessibility Plan/Strategy (this document) available in the following ways:

- A copy is posted on the school website
- A copy is available from the school office on request
- A copy can be e-mailed or posted on request

Contact Details

High Oaks
St. Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 6DR

Tel: 01727 853047

Email: admin@townsend.herts.sch.uk

For details of the Learning Support Program, please contact the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) Miss H Castle via the above address.

Complaints

Parents/carers and staff have access to the school's Complaints Procedures (available from the website or on request). Students may go through their tutors, other staff including Directors of Learning and the

Senior Leadership Team, or through other students, such as the Head Student Team or form representatives etc.

This document, all policies and documents from our website, and documents used in our day to day communications can be provided in a larger font on request.

We would like to acknowledge the inspiration provided by accessibility plans available on the public internet by Greenford High School, Durrington High School, and Hartshill School