

SHERRARDSWOOD SCHOOL

Accessibility Plan

Reference:

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001).

Introduction

This plan has been produced after a review of existing arrangements for improving accessibility within Sherrardswood School and an audit of the School for accessibility. It has been updated in December 2010.

Sherrardswood School believes it is wrong to discriminate against disabled pupils or prospective pupils. It will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils and disabled prospective pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled. It will work to improve staff understanding of the requirements of disabled pupils. It will develop and operate an accessibility plan.

Sherrardswood School is located on a 25 acre site with some buildings set into a hillside. Many of the buildings have several stories and some are without lifts. The Lockleys complex is Grade II* listed.

The system of having departmental areas, in particular for Music and Art, allows facilities for a subject to be concentrated in one place but demands the movement of pupils around the site between periods, often up steps or stairs in buildings without lifts. It is not hard to conclude that any pupil with impaired mobility is going to be at a disadvantage and possibly prohibited altogether from access to some or all of the educational and other facilities the school offers. Nor can these matters be remedied in any substantial way by reasonable adjustments short of making major alterations to the physical features of the school at a prohibitive cost. Even the fruition of long term plans can only go some way to ameliorate the position.

The Governors have an Estates Strategy, an aspirational long-term building development programme, which will provide new or replace some existing facilities. It is believed that this route offers the quickest and most effective way to meet Disability Legislation.

The Governors, dependent on the financial viability of the School, provide funding for building maintenance and minor refurbishment. A proportion of money from this budget will be used within the pre-planned maintenance schedule to improve accessibility for pupils with impaired mobility as and when required.

1. Admissions

Sherrardswood School selects pupils for admission on the grounds of academic ability. To ease the burden of the entrance examination, the School would liaise closely with the parent/guardian or the pupil's current school on the mechanics of the exams to be taken.

Liaison may take the form of a meeting or by telephone conversation to discuss any special arrangements. The School would be prepared to consider and provide the following aids to the prospective disabled pupil:

- Large print examination papers
- Extra time to complete the examination paper

- Accessibility to the examination room for impaired mobility pupils
- Laptop computers

It will not be possible to provide an exam room with a hearing loop nor provide a secretary or teacher from within school resources knowledgeable in sign language to assist and oversee the examination.

2. Curriculum

It is recognised that the curriculum should be accessible for those with disabilities. Pupils who have educational statements or who have been diagnosed with a learning disability will be provided for according to their needs (see the Learning Support Policy). Pupils who are entitled to extra time in examinations will be given this in all internal as well as external examinations and laptops will be allowed and provided if recommended.

3. Buildings and Accessibility

It is the policy of the Governors to improve access to buildings and facilities over a period of time, as finances permit.

4. Vehicular Access

Disabled parking has been provided at both Lockleys and Mimram car parks. All parts of the school can be accessed by motor vehicles although it is recognised that this is awkward at out 'listed' end of the site.

5. Paths

Wheelchairs have access via paths to most areas of the school, but specific parts of the listed buildings remain inaccessible due to their maturity and construction. Portable ramps have been purchased to provide wheelchair access to the main Lockleys building, but routes may be circuitous.

6. Buildings

Many of the School's buildings were erected before consideration was given to disabled access. These buildings include the top floor of Lockleys House, the top floor of the Junior Art Block and the top floor of the Music House. Mimram Building has wheelchair access and a lift to the first floor. The temporary classrooms are all suitable for wheelchair access. Any new building will be designed to incorporate current access requirements and disability legislation.

7. Lavatories for the Disabled

Lavatories for the disabled are situated in both Lockleys and Mimram locations.

8. Education

As the school operates a policy of departmental areas access to some subject teaching could be restricted or impossible. Wherever possible lessons that are not equipment dependent could be moved to ground floor classrooms where access by wheelchair is possible. Each case would be judged on the circumstances pertaining at the time.

9. Special Educational Needs

All information relating to Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) can be accessed via the Learning Support Policy.

10. Medical

Signed parental consent is required for Staff to administer prescribed medicines for medical disabilities such as asthma and diabetes. The refectory manager operates a policy of food being nut free and will provide meals for those with special dietary requirements. Many classrooms have digital projectors that ease the viewing of subject matter. These will be helpful to those with a sight impediment. Larger print course notes and examination papers will be introduced as and when appropriate. The provision of hearing loops has been considered, but with the geographical and dispersed nature of the classrooms, together with the grouping of subjects within specific buildings, it is neither practical nor financially viable for the School to install such provision. However, such a facility will be considered in improvement plans to existing buildings and in the provision for new development.

11. Welfare

All staff are informed of any pupils with disabilities and of the need to be aware of potential difficulties such as:

- Bullying (see anti-bullying policy)
- Non-integration into forms (see details of the Pastoral system in Parental Handbook)

The centre of the pastoral system is the form tutor, who is the primary point of contact.

12. Activities and Trips

The School encourages all pupils to attend a variety of trips and activities. These may be sporting, cultural or adventurous. At such venues the programme of activities can be modified to facilitate participation regardless of disability. The School is currently developing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and is aware that it gives specific guidance to enable disabled pupils to achieve awards. Staffing ratios can be adjusted to provide extra help when necessary. Occasionally it may be considered that the welfare of the pupil with a particular disability cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of the disability and the specific environment and the terrain. In such circumstances it may not be possible to provide a suitable level of supervision and care to enable the pupil to participate in the activity safely.

Updated 18th November 2010