

Access Policy

Introduction

St Bede's Catholic Middle School has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010:

- not to treat pupils who are disabled less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- to make reasonable adjustments for pupils who are disabled, so they are not put at a substantial disadvantage;
- to draw up plans to show how, over time, we will increase access to education for pupils who are disabled.

Aims of the Policy

This policy sets out the proposals of our school to increase access to education for pupils who are disabled in the three areas required by the planning duties of the Equality Act:

- increasing the extent to which pupils who are disabled can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the environment of the school so pupils who are disabled can take greater advantage of education and associated services;
- improving the delivery of the curriculum to pupils who are disabled.

Main Body of the Policy

1. What defines 'reasonable adjustments'?

In determining what is reasonable the school will have regard to:

- The financial resources available to the school
- The costs of any particular alteration to the premises, staffing arrangements, or special equipment required
- The practicality of making reasonable adjustments
- The extent to which aids and services will be provided via a Statement of Educational Needs statement (or Education Health Care Plan), or by provision paid for outside the school's resources
- Health and Safety requirements
- The interests of other pupils
- The need to maintain academic, musical, sporting or other standards

2. Statement of Intent

- The St Bede's Catholic Middle School is committed to resourcing, implementing, reviewing and revising the Disability Access Policy tri-annually. Regular disability Access Audits are undertaken as part of this process.

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| Signature: Chair of Academy Representatives | Name: | Date: |
| Signature: Principal | Name: | Date: |
| Signature: Chair of Pupil Welfare Committee | Name: | Date: |

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3. The St Bede's Ethos

Our purpose is

- to be sensitive to the needs of every child
- to reduce barriers to learning in every area of school life
- to ensure the curriculum is accessible to every student
- to keep equality of opportunity enshrined in our practice
- to have regard to any Department for Education's guidance as may be in force and amended from time to time

4. What constitutes a disability?

The Equality Act describes a person who is disabled as having '*a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*'.

¹ Long term – means has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

Physical impairment may cover mobility difficulties and sensory difficulties such as hearing and visual impairment, and medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or HIV.

Mental impairment includes neurological deficits such as specific learning difficulties, autistic spectrum conditions (ASC), speech and language difficulties, mental health conditions and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

A very large group of children is included within the definition of disability, including children with significant behaviour difficulties which relate to an underlying impairment.

Not all pupils who have a learning difficulty or special educational need are disabled.

5. Identifying the needs of pupils

Parents, carers, guardians and teachers collaborate to identify and provide for the needs of individual pupils, as outlined in pupil profiles, individual educational plans and pastoral support plans. This process is managed in School by the respective SENCO in conjunction with the Principal and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The views and aspirations of pupils who are disabled, their families and designated professionals are an important part of our development planning.

Parents, carers or guardians of children with disabilities or special educational needs are expected to notify them to the school at the point of registration. If these are not known at the time, the school should be notified as soon as they are recognised. Parents, carers or guardians are requested to complete the Additional Needs Form when registering a place for their child at the School and include details of any special circumstances relating to their child's health, allergies, disabilities or learning difficulties or other circumstances which may affect their child's performance in the admissions process and ability to fully participate in the education provided by the School.

Parents, carers or guardians will also be asked to provide copies of any professional reports e.g. Educational Psychologist's report or professional reports from other agencies or a Statement of Educational Needs / Education Health and Care Plan (if applicable). Early notification is of great value, as it will enable the school to consider whether reasonable adjustments need to be made for a disabled child during the admissions process and what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made at St Bede's Catholic Middle School to support the child's future education should an offer of a place be made.

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As part of the admissions process, staff will meet with parents, carers or guardians to discuss whether or not a prospective pupil will be able to access the curriculum and what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made to facilitate this. In determining this, the school may request further information, such as a medical certificate or additional assessments, that the School considers necessary to make a fair assessment.

If, after consultation, the school decides that is unable to adequately cater for the needs of those children with disabilities, St Bede's Catholic Middle School will be unable to offer a place and parents will be informed why an offer will not be made.

Most pupils stay at St Bede's Catholic Middle School for many years. It is possible that during their education a pupil may become disabled or his or her special educational needs may first be identified, or become more serious. Continuing communication between parents, carers, guardians and staff is vital and the School will consult with parents, carers or guardians about what reasonable adjustments, if any, can be made in order to allow a disabled child to continue at the School. Should a child fail to thrive at school, despite support in class, and, if necessary, additional specialist teaching, the parents, carers or guardians will be advised on the appropriate assessment process for their child.

At all times, St Bede's Catholic Middle School will take full account of:

- specific impairments
- pupil and parental views
- advice from teachers
- advice from other designated professionals

6. Coordination and Implementation

This is the responsibility of the Principal, the the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the SENCO, and all teachers.

7. Responsibility

In order that The St Bede's Catholic Middle School is fully compliant with the Equality Act, all staff are made aware of the duties towards children who are disabled and the 'reasonable adjustments' needed for particular children. These are outlined in Pupil Profiles prepared by the school's SENCO.

8. Concerns or complaints

The St Bede's Catholic Middle School has an internal complaints procedure (see policy document), which starts by asking parents, carers or guardians to raise any concern or completing with the person in charge, then the management group, then Academy Representatives. Beyond this, the Disability Rights Commission (www.drc-gb.org; 08457 622 633) provides a confidential help line and a conciliation service.

The School also recognizes that disabled pupils or those with special educational needs or learning difficulties may be at risk of being bullied. The School has a Anti Bullying Policy which makes it clear that bullying behaviour of any kind is not acceptable and will be taken very seriously.

Parents/carers/guardians will be issued with a hard copy of this Policy on request. This Policy will also be made available to parents/carers/guardians via the School's website.