

LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2003-2006

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), Section 28d and 28e, amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001, Leicester City Council Education Authority (LEA) has a duty to prepare an Accessibility Strategy. The aim of such a Strategy is to improve Disabled Access to City Schools for which the LEA is responsible and to increase the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided by those schools. The plan is intended to run for an initial period of 3 years and will be kept under review and revised as appropriate.
- 1.2 In addition, the Governing Body of each school has a duty to prepare an Accessibility Plan for improving the physical environment of the school. Accessibility plans must also be kept under review and revised regularly.
- 1.3 These documents must set out how over the specified period, schools will:
- i.) Increase the extent to which disabled pupils are able to participate in the school curriculum;
 - ii.) Improve the physical environment of schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by the school; and
 - iii.) To improve the delivery to disabled pupils of written information which is provided to pupils who are not disabled. (This must be delivered within a reasonable time and in ways that are determined after taking account of the pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.
- 1.4 The Accessibility Strategy will also cover the needs of adult learner and young people using the youth services, as appropriate. As with the Authority's Policy on Special Educational Needs, the LEA will consider each case of disability individually, giving due consideration to each aspect of the individual learner's difficulties. When making specific arrangements, the health and safety of staff will also be taken into account.
- 1.5 This Strategy is underpinned by the Corporate aims of Leicester City Council and the objectives of the Education Department as set out in the Education Development Plan.
- 1.6 The Council's Corporate priorities are highlighted in the Community Plan. These are:
- Diversity – addressing inequalities and meeting the needs of communities
 - Education – securing and promoting learning environments
 - Health & Social Care – improving access to facilities and services for all

- Environment – promotion of a high quality built and natural environment
- Community safety – improving safety and personal security
- Jobs and regeneration – consolidate and diversify the local economy

1.7 The education priorities are set out within the Education Development Plan as follows:

- To raise attainment of pupils from 3 to 7
- To raise attainment of pupils from 7 to 11
- To raise attainment of pupils from 11 to 14
- To raise attainment of pupils from 14 to 19
- To narrow the attainment gap and tackle underachievement for pupils with SEN, including pupils with challenging behaviour, gifted and talented, Looked After Children and vulnerable pupils
- To continue to provide co-ordinated and consistent support for schools causing concern
- To implement the co-ordinated strategy for teacher supply, recruitment and retention
- To promote effective language acquisition for all pupils, with specific reference to underachieving pupils from ethnic communities and from areas of high socio-economic deprivation

1.8 The Education Department's agreed purposes are:

- Supporting school improvement – working with schools, using the whole resources of the LEA to improve levels of achievement among all pupils and especially those who are disadvantaged.
- Meeting Special Educational Needs – supporting all schools to respond even more effectively to the demands of pupils with Special Educational Needs – both those with and without formal statements.
- Promoting Lifelong Learning – encouraging and assisting adults to continue with, or resume, educational activity – directly through the Department and indirectly with other partners, including schools, incorporated colleges, the voluntary sector and employers.
- Enhancing quality of life – supporting through enabling individual development, the educational, social, economic, cultural and spiritual development of those individuals and the communities in which they live

2. IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

New School Buildings

2.1 All new school buildings, major extensions and remodelling works are designed to comply with the Building Regulations and the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999. The Council aims to provide buildings that are accessible to all users and designers follow the recommendations of Building Bulletin 91, 'Access for Disabled People to School Buildings' and the Council's own Guidance 'Paving the Way'.

- 2.2 The Council requires designers of school buildings to carry out an 'Access Audit' during the design stage. The audit examines matters such as approaches to buildings, car parking, external ramps, entrances, reception areas, corridors, stairs and lifts, toilets, internal surfaces and colour schemes, way-finding, lighting, and acoustics. This is not intended to be an inclusive list.

Existing School Buildings

- 2.3 It is anticipated that all schools will carry out an accessibility audit as a first step in preparing their accessibility improvement plan. The access audit will enable schools to establish their priorities for access improvements.
- 2.4 The Council carried out an audit of wheelchair accessible spaces in schools in April 2001. This is the baseline for the accessibility improvement targets set out in the Schools Asset Management Plan. A summary of the audit is set out in Appendix A. It is accepted that access for wheelchair users is but one aspect of the accessibility improvement strategy. Nevertheless, it provides a useful baseline measure and improvement targets and it tends to be the most expensive form of improvement in practice. Improvements to the physical environment for visually or hearing impaired users can often be achieved at little additional cost by the selection of appropriate colour schemes, wall and floor finishes, etc. The baseline measure of wheelchair accessible teaching areas was 54.2% of Primary Schools, 52.0% of Secondary Schools and 53.0% overall.
- 2.5 The improvement target set out in the Schools Asset Management Plan is to increase wheelchair accessibility by at least 5% per annum. Access improvements will be implemented by schools, in accordance with their Accessibility Improvement Plans. These in turn, will form part of their School Property Plans.

Prioritisation and Links with Other Modernisation Works

- 2.6 Historically, the LEA has given priority to schools that need to carry out improvements to meet the individual needs of pupils with special needs. A panel of officers assesses funding requests submitted by schools. It is intended that this policy will continue.
- 2.7 The LEA believes that access improvements should be prioritised alongside other suitability issues, provided that this is carried out in a way that is consistent with its statutory obligations under DDA and SENDA. Also, in terms of value for money and disruption to schools, there is a significant advantage in implementing access improvements in conjunction with other building works, wherever practicable. By implication, this means that it is desirable to use funds for access improvements in conjunction with other capital funds, provided always that funds such as Schools Access Initiative are ring-fenced for their intended purpose.
- 2.8 The process used by the LEA to achieve the twin objectives of prioritising across the range of suitability issues facing schools and joining up funding streams effectively, is set out in the AMP Local Policy Statement. A brief summary of the process is set out below:

- The LEA, in consultation with schools and other local partners, identifies a proportion of the total available capital funding to be made available to schools to address suitability issues. In this respect, access is regarded as a suitability issue and schools access funds are included in the identified proportion.
- Suitability surveys are carried out in all schools and suitability issues are categorised from A to D, depending on their severity and potential impact on the school with Category A as the highest priority (although, in practice, there are very few Category A issues). Schools are asked to prioritise the issues within each category to form their own priority programme.
- Schools should carry out access audits and identify access issues that need to be addressed. Schools will then combine access issues with other suitability issues by categorising them as B issues and placing them in the appropriate place in the priority list.
- The LEA delegates funding to schools to address suitability issues (including access issues) in priority order, i.e., addressing Category A issues first, then Category B issues and so on. Schools are required to make a request for funds and provide a justification for the project together with a cost estimate. It should be noted that constraints on funding will require the LEA to prioritise projects in the case of requests from several schools where there is a need to address equal categories of suitability issues. Priorities will then be determined on the basis of supporting statements from schools and an assessment of how closely each project meets AMP priorities.
- Schools Access Initiative Funds will be devolved for access improvements only. In practice, the criteria for prioritising requests will mean that requests for access improvements will be awarded a high priority.

2.9 It is accepted that a target of 100% accessibility for all schools is not practicable or achievable in the short to medium term, given the age and architectural style of some school buildings. The process described above is intended to support reasonable improvements or adjustments and to allocate funding equitably but will not permit the funding of disproportionately expensive access improvements. However, if the Government's proposed strategy for Secondary School renewal, 'Building Schools for the Future', is implemented in full, it would be possible for all Secondary schools to be fully inclusive.

2.10 In future, the proposals for Schools with Additional Resources (SARs) may require some changes to the prioritisation process in order to ensure that the collective needs of pupils in those schools receive some priority over other schools in order to accelerate access improvements.

Funding for Access Improvements in Schools

- 2.11 The LEA proposes to use Schools Access Initiative funds in conjunction with other schools' capital funds to implement access improvement projects. It is anticipated that the SAI fund will be maintained at the 2003/04 level of £638,000, of which £50,000 is for VA schools.
- 2.12 Analysis of requests from schools to provide funds to meet the needs of individual pupils indicates that an amount of approximately £200,000 per annum (adjusted for inflation) should be sufficient for this purpose.
- 2.13 The total funding available to devolve to schools to address suitability issues (including access issues) in 2003/04 is £1,450,000 (excluding the £200,000 cited above). Around £540,000 of this will be ring-fenced for access improvements.
- 2.14 The Learning and Skills Council provided a further £91,000 in 2002/03 and £214,000 in 2003/04, to fund access improvements in connection with Adult Education.
- 2.15 The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) has made funding available to the Youth Service to ensure that young people with disabilities have equal access to Youth Service provision. The funding allocated for capital and revenue costs is as follows:

2002-2003	£45,259
2003-2004	£51,459

3. ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM

- 3.1 The primary responsibility for ensuring that all learners have equal access to the curriculum rests with schools and Lifelong Learning settings. All schools must ensure that disabled pupils received their entitlement to the full national curriculum by offering opportunities for such pupils to extend their learning in a range of contexts. Unless there are exceptional circumstances set out in statutory regulations relating to Special Educational Needs, all disabled pupils should receive the full national curriculum without disapplication.
- 3.2 The LEA will continue to offer support, guidance and advice via its specialist support services (Special Needs Teaching Service, Educational psychology Service and Special Education Service) to individual pupils and to schools and other learning settings both in the delivery of the curriculum and the development and implementation of individual plans.
- 3.3 Such support extends to advice and guidance on the use and purchase of specialist aids and equipment for disabled learners, to help them access the curriculum. In many cases, specialist equipment will be purchased by schools using delegated resources. However, there will be cases where larger items of more expensive equipment technical equipment will be purchased from central funding and will be provided according to specific criteria. These decisions will be taken by the SEN Management Reference Group. A document called *DRC Code of Practice (Schools)* provides information on ensuring accessibility to the curriculum for all learners and to develop inclusive education practices.

4. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 4.1 Under the Act, disabled learners and their families are entitled to receive information about their education available in a format which is accessible. The LEA already provides information in a variety of formats to assist people with hearing and visual impairments. The LEA keeps under review, the accessibility of all of its documents and will extend these during the next three years. Hearing Impairment and Visual Impairment services provide advice and guidance to schools on alternative formats. Other presentation of information includes information technology.
- 4.2 The LEA's specialist services can also provide advice and training on the production or curricular and other information in learners' preferred formats. These arrangements should be included within each schools' accessibility plan.
- 4.3 The LEA will continue to offer a wide range of training and support to staff and governors on the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act. The LEA will also provide training as appropriate to its own staff to ensure awareness of and compliance with, the relevant legislation.

5. FURTHER GUIDANCE

- 5.1 The DfES has already issued guidance to schools. The Disability Rights Commission also sent guidance to school in September 2002. Schools and other learning settings may find these helpful in drawing up and implementing their own strategies and plans. Appended to this document is a further (non-exhaustive list of guidance and other resources that may be useful.
- 5.2 The Authority's specialist support services have a range of materials available in order to support individual learners and those responsible for their education. These services can also provide bespoke materials and training where there are particular issues regarding disabled learners.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

- 6.1 The actions set out in the strategy will be monitored by Service managers and the progress of the Accessibility Strategy reported on an annual basis.
- 6.2 The Authority's standards inspectors will keep under review schools' progress in developing and implementing accessibility strategies and plans through the schools' self-evaluation process, as part of their routine visits.

APPENDIX A

Primary Schools

Please note that this information was collected in 2001 and does not register improvements made since that period. It is, therefore, being presented here for illustrative purposes only. In addition, teaching areas may also have changed since 2001.

Potential Class Bases	ESTABLISHMENT	Pot. Gross teaching area (m2)	0% accessible	Net teaching area accessible (m2)
27	Abbey Primary Community School	1458	100	1458
23	Alderman Richard Hallam Primary	1242	73	907
9	Avenue Infants	486	80	389
13	Avenue Junior	702	81	569
16	Barley Croft Primary School	864	66	570
11	Beaumont Lodge Primary School	594	100	594
8	Belgrave St Peters CofE Primary School	432	100	432
10	Bendbow Rise Infant School	540	10	54
8	Braunstone Frith Infant School	432	75	324
12	Braunstone Frith Junior School	648	36	233
12	Bridge Junior School	648	0	0
21	Buswells Lodge Primary School	1134	60	680
18	Caldecote Community Primary School	972	100	972
10	Catherine Infant School	540	80	432
17	Catherine Junior School	918	100	918
14	Charnwood Primary School	756	21	159
11	Christ the King Catholic Primary School	594	45	267
20	Coleman Primary School	1080	60	648
10	Crescent Junior School	540	50	270
18	Dovetails Primary School	972	83	807
10	Evington Valley Primary School	540	100	540
16	Eyres Monsell Primary School	864	0	0
14	Folville Junior School	756	80	605
15	Forest Lodge Primary School	810	6	49
12	Fosse Primary School	648	71	460
8	Glebelands Primary School	432	100	432
14	Granby Primary School	756	17	129
10	Green Lane Infant School	540	0	0
9	Hazel Primary School	486	30	146
11	Heatherbrook Primary School	594	90	535
13	Herrick Primary School	702	85	597
8	Highfields Primary School	432	100	432
12	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School	648	50	324
10	Humberstone Infant School	540	20	108
13	Humberstone Junior School	702	47	330
11	Imperial Ave Infant School	594	0	0
8	Inglehurst Infant School	432	82	354
12	Inglehurst Junior School	648	70	454
11	Kestrels' Field Primary School	594	82	487
6	King Richard III Infant School & Nursery	324	89	288
11	Knighton Fields Primary School	594	82	487

12	Linden Primary School	648	0	0	
15	Marriott Primary School	810	0	0	
15	Mayflower Primary School	810	0	0	
14	Medway Coomunity Primary School	756	25	189	
21	Mellor Community Primary School	1134	45	510	
5	Merrydale Infant School	270	100	270	
12	Merrydale Junior School	648	66	428	
15	Montrose Primary School	810	90	729	
12	Mowmacre Hill Primary School	648	72	467	
7	Newry Junior School	378	50	189	
14	Northfield House Primary School	756	77	582	
10	Overdale Infant School	540	0	0	
13	Overdale Junior School	702	40	281	
10	Parks Primary School	540	50	270	
8	Queensmead Infant School	432	0	0	
8	Queensmead Junior School	432	70	302	
7	Rolleston Infant School	378	50	189	
8	Rolleston Junior School	432	0	0	
11	Rowlatts Hill Primary School	594	35	208	
20	Rushey Mead Primary School	1080	70	756	
14	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	756	0	0	
10	St Barnabas CofE Primary School	540	80	432	
18	St John the Baptist CofE Primary School	972	100	972	
12	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	648	40	259	
6	St Mary's Fields Infant School	324	0	0	
8	St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	432	34	147	
9	St Thomas More Catholic Primary School	486	25	122	
21	Sandfield Close Primary School	1134	66	748	
13	Scraptoft Valley Primary School	702	60	421	
9	Shaftesbury Junior School	486	100	486	
14	Shenton Primary School	756	100	756	
5	Slater Primary School	270	0	0	
6	Southfields Infant School	324	50	162	
13	Sparkenhoe Primary School & CC	702	74	519	
26	Spinne Hill Primary School & CC	1404	45	632	
10	Stokes Wood Primary School	540	0	0	
16	Taylor Primary School	864	25	216	
13	Thurnby Lodge Primary School	702	27	190	
15	Uplands Infant School	810	0	0	
12	Uplands Junior School	648	85	551	
15	Whitehall Primary School	810	53	429	
13	Willowbrook Primary School	702	65	456	
15	Wolsey House Primary School	810	25	203	
15	Woodstock Primary School	810	76	616	
17	Wyvern Primary School	918	66	606	
Totals		58536	m2	31733	m2
Net area divided by gross area x 100		54.20%			

Secondary Schools

Potential Class Bases	ESTABLISHMENT	Pot. Gross teaching area (m2)	0% accessible	Net teaching area accessible (m2)
83	Babington C.T.C	4482	90	4034
62	Beaumont Leys School	3348	55	1841
99	City of Leicester School	5346	50	2673
82	Crown Hills	4428	60	2657
64	English Martyrs R.C.	3456	80	2765
66	Fullhurst C.C.	3564	98	3493
92	Hamilton C.C.	4968	15	745
	Judgemeadow	0	40	0
75	Lancaster School	4050	60	2430
62	Moat C.C.	3348	100	3348
118	New College	6372	49	3122
53	Riverside College	2862	14	401
102	Rushey Mead	5508	75	4131
61	St Paul's Catholic	3294	0	0
80	Sir Jonathan North	4320	2	86
74	Soar Valley C.C.	3996	30	1199

Totals

63342 m2

32925 m2

Net area divided by gross area x 100 52.0%

APPENDIX B

PUBLICATIONS

Useful Documents (this list is not exhaustive)

Disability Rights Commission: Code of Practice for Schools. Available from the DRC. Tel: 08457 622 633. Website: www.drc-gb.org

Guidance on matters to be taken into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability. Available from The Stationery Office.

DfES: Inclusive Schooling: children with Special Educational Needs. Ref: DfES 0774/2001, published November 2001. Available from the DfES Publications Centre.

DfES: SEN Code of Practice 2001 and SEN Toolkit. Published December 2001. Available from the DfES Publications Centre and website. Website: www.dfes.gov.uk/sen

Access to School Premises

DfEE: Access for Disabled people to School Buildings: Management and Design Guide. Building Bulletin 91. 1999. £14.95. Available from The Stationery Office and website: www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolbuildings

DfEE and DfES Asset Management Plans Guidance – Sections 1-6. 2000 and 2001. Sent to all LEAs. Available from DfES Publication Centre and website: www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolbuildings

DfEE: Inclusive School Design Building – Bulletin 94. 2001. £19.95. Available from The Stationery Office and website: www.dfes.gov.uk/schoolbuildings

DfES: Guidance on the Constructional Standards for Schools. July 2001. Available from DfES Publications Centre.

Other Useful Publications

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education: Index for Inclusion. 2000. £24.50. Available from CSIE. Tel: 0117 344 4007. Fax: 0117 344 4005. Website: www.inclusion.org.uk

DfEE: Connecting Schools for Inclusion: An interactive CD Rom which looks at strengthening links between special and mainstream schools to support the inclusion of pupils with SEN. Available from Voluntary partnerships Team, SEN Division, DfES. Tel: 020 7925 6881. Fax: 020 7925 5920.

Disability Equality in Education: Training for Inclusion and Disability Equality Course Book. Priced. This and other resources for inclusion and disability equality are available from DEE, Tel: 020 7359 2855; E-mail info@diseed.org.uk Website: www.diseed.org.uk

OFSTED: Evaluating Educational Inclusion. Guidance for inspectors and schools. October 2000. Ref No: HMI 235. Available from OFSTED. Tel: 020 7421 6800. Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

RNID: Effective Inclusion of Deaf Pupils into Mainstream Schools. Education guidelines project. 2001. Information available from tel: 0808 808 9000. Website: www.rnid.org.uk

RNID: Promoting Access to the Curriculum for Deaf Pupils. Education guidelines project. 2001. Information available from tel: 0808 808 0123. Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Useful Websites

BECTA: British Educational Communications and Technology Agency: www.becta.org.uk

Inclusion website: www.inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk

This website provides a free catalogue of resources for teaching professionals, learners, parents and carers. Resources include publications, software, hardware, guidance and links to other organisations to aid independent living and learning.

DRC: The Disability Rights Commission: www.drc-gb.org