

Emerson Park Academy



ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

2026 – 2029

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 replaced all previous equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Sex Discrimination Act.

The Equality Act 2010 provides a single, consolidated source of discrimination law, covering all the types of discrimination that are unlawful. It simplifies the law by removing anomalies and inconsistencies that had developed over time in the existing legislation, and it extends the protection from discrimination in certain areas.

The law on disability discrimination is different from the rest of the Act in a number of ways. The overriding principle of equalities legislation is generally one of equal treatment. However, the provisions in relation to disability are different in that you may, and often must, treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person.

There are some minor differences around disability in the new Act when compared with the previous legislation.

- The Equality Act does not list the types of day to day activities which a disabled person must be unable to carry out to meet the definition
- Failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be justified. The fact that it must be 'reasonable' provides the necessary test.
- Direct discrimination against a disabled person can no longer be justified (bringing it into line with the definition of direct discrimination generally).
- From September 2012 schools and local authorities are under a duty to supply auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments where these are not being supplied through a statement of SEND.

As in previous legislation a school must not discriminate against a student because of something that is a consequence of their disability.

It is unlawful for a school to treat a disabled student unfavourably. Such treatment could amount to:

- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Discrimination arising from a disability
- Harassment

Direct discrimination can never be justified but a school could justify indirect discrimination against a disabled student, and discrimination arising from a disability if the discrimination is the result of action that is a 'proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'.

2. DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Equality Act 2010: a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment;
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial;
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions);
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.

Progressive conditions considered to be a disability

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions. People with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with some visual impairment are automatically deemed to be disabled.

Conditions that are specifically excluded

Some conditions are specifically excluded from being covered by the disability definition, such as a tendency to set fires or addictions to non-prescribed substances.

It should be noted that this definition is *not just regarding physical difficulties* but also covers a wide range of:

- Sensory difficulties
- Learning difficulties
- Impairment resulting from, or consisting of, a mental illness

In addition there is a range of 'hidden impairments' such as

- Dyslexia
- Speech and Language Impairments
- Autism
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Impairment does not itself mean that a student is disabled but rather it is the effect on the student's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in one or more of the following areas that has to be considered:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical coordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Perception of risk of physical danger

3. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

We have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students:

- When something we do places a disabled student at a substantial disadvantage to other students, we must take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage;
- We will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled student when it would be reasonable to do so, and where such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage the student faces in comparison to his non-disabled peers.

A failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be justified. The test is whether the adjustment is reasonable, and if it is then there can be no justification for why it is not made. We will not be expected to make adjustments that are not reasonable.

There is as yet no clarity on what may be 'reasonable' although the Code of Practice will include factors that should be considered. It will be for us to decide the reasonableness of adjustments based on the individual circumstances of each case. Factors to consider may include the financial or other resources available, the effectiveness of the adjustment, its effect on other students, health and safety requirements, and whether aids have been made available through the SEND route.

The reasonable adjustments duty is intended to complement the accessibility planning duties, and the existing SEND statement provisions, under which Local Authorities have to provide auxiliary aids and services where a statement details that provision. When a disabled student does not have a statement

of SEND (or the statement does not provide the necessary aid) then the duty to consider reasonable adjustments and provide such auxiliary aids will fall to the school.

As in the previous legislation we are not under a duty to make alterations to the physical environment though we should be planning to do so as part of our Accessibility planning.

4. AIMS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

The planning duties on schools and Local Authorities are the same as the duties in the previous DDA. Schools are required to have an Accessibility Plan detailing how they will improve access to the physical environment, increase access to the curriculum for disabled students, and how they will improve the availability of accessible information to disabled students. The LA is required to have an Access Strategy.

At Emerson Park Academy, we have a commitment to equal opportunities for all members of the school community and our Accessibility Plan outlines our intention to remove barriers for disabled students and to:

- increase the extent to which disabled students can participate in the different areas of the national curriculum, increase access to extra-curricular activities and the wider school curriculum;
- improve the physical environment of school to enable disabled students to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided; and
- improve the availability of accessible information to disabled students.

Furthermore, under our equality duties, we intend to improve the physical environment of the school to enable any disabled person (student, parent/carer, employees or visitor) to access facilities and services and improve the availability of accessible information to any disabled person.

This Accessibility Plan will, therefore, begin the process of addressing the needs of disabled people through specific targets.

It is a requirement that the school's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented and reviewed and revised as necessary. Attached is a set of action plans showing how the school will address the priorities identified in the plan.

Compliance with the disability duty under the Equality Act is consistent with the school's aims and Single Equality Scheme, and the operation of the school's SEND policy.

The Action Plan for physical accessibility relates in part, to the Asset Management Plan (access section) of the School, which is undertaken regularly by the Local Authority. It may not be feasible to undertake some of the works during the life of this Accessibility Plan and therefore some items will roll forward into subsequent plans. The Plan will need to be revisited prior to the end of each first three-year plan period in order to inform the development of the new Plan for the following period.

We strive to ensure that the culture and ethos of the school are such that, whatever the abilities and needs of members of the school community, everyone is equally valued and treats one another with respect. Students should be provided with the opportunity to experience, understand and value diversity.

5. KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of our Accessibility Plan are as follows:

- To reduce and eliminate barriers to access to the curriculum and to full participation in the school community for students, and prospective students, with a disability.
- We are committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all students, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

- We are committed to providing all students with a broad and balanced curriculum, differentiated and adjusted to meet the needs of individual students and their preferred learning styles; and we endorse the key principles in the National Curriculum Framework which underpin the development of a more inclusive curriculum:
 - setting suitable learning challenges;
 - responding to a student's diverse learning needs;
 - overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of students.

6. CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

- Emerson Park Academy is located in Hornchurch;
- It is a community school for students aged 11 – 16 years
- 1032 students attend (May 2022);
- The school consists of five buildings, the main building being a 3 storey building with stair access to the upper floors, two 2 storey buildings, both with 11 classrooms each, one with stair access to the upper floors and the other with both stairs and lift to the upper floors, 2 single storey buildings, one with 3 classrooms and the other with 2 classrooms;
- The school is a stand-alone Academy.

7. DEVELOPMENT

7.1 The Purpose and Direction of the School's Plan: Vision and Values

The size of our school allows us to know each student as an individual yet still provide huge school success and opportunities. We aim to provide a caring, but challenging environment that pushes students to achieve the very best academic outcomes. Staff and students agreed on the following vision which runs at the core of everything we do.

Our vision is to create a school community in which you can

- Be respected
- Be resilient
- Be valued

To this end, our School:

- has high ambitions for all students, including those with disabilities and expects them to participate and achieve in every aspect of school life;
- is committed to identifying and then removing barriers to disabled students in all aspects of school life;
- values the individual and the contribution they make to all aspects of school life;
- will strive to ensure that its disabled students have access to all areas of the curriculum and teaching resources so as to develop fully in their education;
- acknowledges a commitment to embrace the key requirements set out in the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement;
- will continue to focus on removing barriers in every area of the life of the school;
- is committed to embracing equal opportunities for all members of the school community.

7.2 Information from Student Data and School Audit

Current student data shows that we have a proportion of students with an EHCP or SEN(D) diagnosis.

The school identifies the following as examples of our good practice:

- Students with SEN(D) participate well in the life of the school. They are well represented in extra-curricular activities and sport.
- Visits and events are planned individually to take in to account the needs of attending students with SEN(D).
- Students with SEN(D) have access to the full curriculum and their curriculum is when required tailored to best suit their individual needs.
- Students with medical needs are well supported by school policies and practices.
- Students with physical disabilities have good access to the majority of the school site through recent investment in building accessibility such as a lift.

The school identifies the following as areas for improvement:

- There are still areas of the school which have limited accessibility to students with disabilities. Notably most internal/external doors that are not self-opening/closing.

8. SCOPE OF THE PLAN

8.1 Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school curriculum

We plan for continuing improvement of access to the curriculum for students with a disability by:

- Expanding and tailoring the curriculum as necessary to ensure that students with a disability are as, equally, prepared for life as are the able-bodied students. This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or off-site visits.
- Providing of specialist aids and equipment, which may assist these students in accessing the curriculum.
- Continuing to seek and follow the advice of LA services, such as specialist teacher advisers and SEND inspectors/advisers, and appropriate health professionals from the local NHS Trusts.

The school governors will support the head teacher and school staff in:

- Considering whole-school ways of increasing participation in activities such as off-site visits, particularly for difficult-to-include student groups, such as those with physical or behavioural challenges;
- How threats to participation have been analysed using risk assessment proforma and action taken to reduce those identified risks;
- deciding how the implementation of specific strategies such as flexible or shared timetabling, nurture groups, counselling provision, access to therapy, first day absence response, have enhanced attendance and participation;
- consideration of how classroom/group organisation has been targeted to ensure that all students achieve increased levels of school success;
- description of action to increase curriculum choice and/or flexibility has enhanced the access to appropriate qualifications/attainments;
- identifying student peer support mechanisms and the ways that the school has ensured students have a voice in decisions that affect them;
- ensuring that action has been undertaken to ensure that parents and carers see themselves as partners in their children's education and are increasingly willing to actively support their children's education;

The school SENDCO, in addition to working with the governors, head teacher and school staff will:

- access or arrange appropriate training for staff as required by staff and students (identified through audit, advice from professional colleagues in other services, parents/carers and young people) in order to better understand the needs of students with a range of disabilities
- be responsible for the dissemination of this knowledge to all staff.
- Have their contribution to staff training evaluated, and where necessary improved, through the appraisal process.
- identify how classroom support arrangements, such as deployment of teaching assistants, provision of ICT, contribute to, and enhance learning opportunities;
- consider the school response to students through the application of the SEND Code of Practice has improved student attainment and how effective communication regarding specific student needs has been achieved and is monitored;
- consider how liaison, increased communication and relationships with external agencies has supported and enhanced students' access to the curriculum and how this is monitored and improvements targeted;
- take action to ensure that disabled members of the school community are seen in a positive light through publications promoting disability and providing positive role models of adults with disabilities to encourage success and achievement;
- enhance the positive culture and ethos of the school by undertaking other additional intervention to improve the school's ability to include those with disabilities.

8.2 Improving the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education and associated services

Whilst good progress has been made over the years with the accessibility of the buildings at Emerson Park Academy, we are aware that some areas of our school are not yet as accessible for students and visitors with disabilities as they could be. Therefore, we propose that in consultation with the LA (where necessary and appropriate) we investigate continuous improvements to the site, to ensure we meet the planning duty required of all schools. These improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- improved access such as steps, stairways, kerbs, exterior surfaces and paving, parking areas, building entrances and exits (including emergency escape routes), internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting, ventilation, lifts, floor coverings, signs and furniture.
- Aids to physical access including ramps, handrails, lifts, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, adjustable lighting and blinds.

In addition, we commit to ensuring that physical aids to access education can be sourced in a timely manner to meet the individual needs of our students as specified by the SEND framework. These physical aids may include items such as:

- ICT equipment
- enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept key boards
- switches
- specialist desks and chairs

We are aware that these adaptations are required regardless of whether the school has students or visitors with disabilities and is preparation for a situation when they do.

8.3 Financial Planning and Control

The Head teacher with the Senior Management Team, together with the Finance Committee will review the financial implications of the School Accessibility Plan as part of the normal budget review process. The objective is that over time the School Accessibility Plan actions will be integrated into the School Development Plan.

We will finance the plan by identifying costs and incorporating them into current and future budget commitments.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Management, Coordination and Implementation

Our Leadership Team will undertake a disability audit using a cross section of staff, students and parents.

Signs of successful implementation of the accessibility plan will include:

- completed training and awareness opportunities to staff, Governors and parents/carers on issues regarding equality and inclusion;
- completed targeted training for particular groups of students/staff;
- collaboration through the provision of information and the sharing of good practice;
- liaison between other local schools including special schools;
- specific support/advice from outside the school, from services, other agencies and organisations;
- knowing that the school is aware of all support services that provide advice to schools and staff.

9.2 Monitoring

We recognise that monitoring is essential to ensure that students with disabilities are not being disadvantaged, and that monitoring leads to action planning.

Governors will be required to comment in their annual report to parents on the accessibility plan and identify any revisions as necessary. Evaluation that may be useful to judge success may include:

- changes in physical accessibility of school buildings;
- questionnaires, responses from stakeholders e.g. parents, students and staff, indicate increased confidence in the school's ability to promote access to educational opportunities for students with disabilities;
- improved levels of confidence in staff in reducing the obstacles to success for students with additional needs;
- evidence that increased numbers of students with disabilities are actively participating in all areas of the school;
- evidence that fewer students are being excluded from school opportunities as their needs are being more effectively addressed through the application of strategies and procedures;
- increased levels of achievement for students with disabilities;
- student responses; verbally, pictorially and written that indicate that they feel themselves to be included;
- Ofsted inspections that identify higher levels of educational inclusion.

9.3 The role of the LA in increasing accessibility

Governors may wish to consider the impact the LA has had upon supporting the school to achieve successful implementation of their accessibility plan (where relevant). This may include identifying how the LA has:

- provided training and awareness opportunities on issues regarding inclusion to staff, governors and parents and how this has been used in school to promote inclusion e.g. uptake of Dyslexia Friendly status, Inclusion Quality Mark, attendance on courses, use and adaptation of LA provided information, etc.;
- promoted collaboration through the provision of information aimed at sharing good practice;
- encouraged liaison between special and mainstream schools to share expertise and student placement;
- ensured that schools are aware of support services that provide advice to schools and staff;
- provided specialist help to identify ways forward in increasing the inclusion of all students;
- linked building adaptations to refurbishment and capital building works;
- informed schools how information can be provided in a number of different formats.

9.4 Accessing the School's Plan

Students, parents and carers will be signposted to the accessibility plan. This will be done through:

- presentation in a section on the school website open to all visitors to the site;

We will ensure that the plan is available in simplified text for those students and parents/carers who have difficulty reading.

10. RELATED POLICIES

The Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with the following policies, strategies and documents:

- Staff Training and Development Plan
- Health & Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Off-Site Visits Procedures
- Whole School Behaviour Policy & procedures
- School Development Plan
- Asset Management Plan
- Complaints Procedures

Emerson Park Academy

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026 – 2029

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM

Target	Strategy	Outcome	Timeframe	Achievement	Date Complete

Emerson Park Academy					
ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026 – 2029					
IMPROVING ACCESS TO WRITTEN INFORMATION					
Target	Strategy	Outcome	Timeframe	Achievement	Date Complete

