

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE:**

# **DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**1.0** This disability and accessibility policy document has been written to support the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 (EqA). The following steps have been taken in drafting this document:

- Evaluation of the existing provision for accessibility from September 2024 to 2027
- Assessment of the possible measures needed in response to the findings
- The development of specific proposals for implementing any changes
- The preparation of a timetable for undertaking the resulting work needed
- The preparation of an accessibility plan attached to this policy see appendix 1.

Matters arising from carrying out this process will be reviewed annually by the school's disability and access committee.

**1.1** As with many schools, current buildings and facilities have developed in a piecemeal manner over the years. The school is committed to making reasonable improvements to offer access to modern curriculum and relevant education. Steep topography, long distances, multi-level buildings and heritage sensitivities can present major obstacles to accessibility on the site for some people. More accessible routes where possible, disabled and shared passenger vehicle parking spaces, cycle stores and new lifts have been provided, and the requirement will continue to be reviewed. The school's policy commits to ensure the best possible access for everyone.

**1.2** The scope of this document embraces accessibility issues where they are seen to be relevant to the following:

- i. Access to the whole site, including vehicular access, together with operational priorities, both as adopted by the school's authorities and by the agencies and adjoining owners with whom they are in co-operation.
- ii. The overall site, park and grounds, including the spaces between buildings, the pathways and landscape.
- iii. The school buildings and facilities generally, including those existing, those proposed, and incorporating the two schools over three sites; junior school (Fan Court), junior school (Stable Court) and the senior school. This includes those elements currently located in Listed Buildings such White Cottage, as well as buildings built more recently.

- iv. The Grade I listed Mansion and the Grade II listed Stable Court and Belvedere.
- v. The operation and management of all the school's buildings and facilities, together with their parkland setting, all as existing and as currently projected.

**1.3** The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA) laid down a duty for schools to plan progressively the increase of accessibility to schools for pupils with disabilities. This duty came into effect from September 2002.

Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), with its requirement for schools to have an access strategy in place came into force in April 2003. This placed specific duties on schools, including:

- i. Not to discriminate against pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities in the provision of education and associated services in schools.
- ii. Not to discriminate in respect of admissions and exclusions specifically.

The Act (DDA), now superseded by the Equalities Act (EqA), places emphasis on making 'reasonable adjustments', and having plans in place to deal with short and long term issues relating to school adaptations.

Due to the nature of the site and the challenging topography between faculty buildings, the school strongly encourages prospective pupils and parents to visit well in advance to discuss requirements and any potential reasonable and achievable adjustments.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

**2.0** The Claremont Fan Court School accessibility policy statement is a response to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA), the Equality Act 2010 (EqA) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (January 2015). It sets out the relevant reasons for, and the parameters within which accessibility can be achieved, or alternatively, may necessarily need reasonably to be restricted.

**2.1** Claremont Fan Court School occupies a complex grouping of 'listed', and other buildings, some of considerable age and architectural distinction, all within a historic and mature park setting, also 'listed' as 'of national importance'. Substantial differences in levels between areas of the site, and steepness of the resultant gradients can present significant challenges to some individuals when moving between or approaching the buildings. Vehicular access to the site is split between its upper and lower levels, with no achievable possibility of movement between the two levels being permitted in planning terms. Vehicle access directly from the old Portsmouth Road, whilst very desirable, can present formidable obstacles to some members of the school community and visitors arriving at the upper level, who then wish to reach the general level of the school buildings. Vehicle access at the lower level directly to many of the school buildings is through the neighbouring residential area along Claremont Drive.

**2.2** The location of the school in its fine park setting, and the historic significance of the listed buildings fosters increasing demand for public access within a highly sensitive area of the ‘green belt’. The adjoining National Trust estate and its success in attracting visitors seems likely to increase markedly and in doing so to add to the sensitivity of related planning issues that could impact on making adjustments. In addition, public access to the exceptional ground floor interior of the mansion, located as it is within a working school environment, presents a particular challenge. As a result, parts of the house are opened to the public at specific times when the school is not in session.

**2.3** The school is highly committed to making reasonable adjustments to support access for all wherever possible. Unfortunately, with such sensitive and conflicting demands, there is scope to achieve comprehensive accessibility in only some areas.

**2.4** Access above the ‘principal floor’ levels of the mansion is greatly affected by requirements for means of evacuation in the event of fire and other health & safety compliance matters. In the context of the historic landscape setting the steepness of the natural gradients will affect the viability and length of particular pedestrian routes. The resulting prolonged journey times for some people with restricted mobility will consequently do much to determine the viability of such routes for them.

## **OBJECTIVES**

**2.5** Claremont Fan Court School senior staff and governors recognise their responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 (SENDA), the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005, and its successor legislation, the Equality Act 2010 (EqA). Claremont Fan Court School is therefore committed to providing a full curriculum to as many pupils as possible that meet the school’s general academic selection criteria, whether or not they have a disability, and thereby aims to enable them to achieve their full potential, academically, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. The school will explore all available methods for providing and improving the accessibility of its buildings and facilities for people with impaired mobility. This policy should be read in conjunction with the school’s other policies and procedures notably: individual needs, health and safety, risk management and first aid.

**2.6** When pupils apply for entry to the school, they will be assessed according to the general entry criteria applicable. All families will be given the opportunity to discuss with the headmaster or head of school any requirements they feel would be helpful for them to access the learning provision on offer. When an applicant discloses any individual requirements the academic and support staff will work together to identify reasonable adjustments to support the child to join the school and access the learning offer.

**2.7** This policy should be read in accordance with the detailed disability and accessibility plan attached. There is a separate but linked document, equalities policy (exams) which details how the school facilitates access to exams and assessments for disabled candidates.

**2.8** If an existing pupil discloses that they have a new requirement to help them access the learning offer, the school will make reasonable adjustments where possible. Such reasonable adjustments do not necessarily extend to providing extra services or equipment, nor to making physical alterations to buildings where this is not feasible/reasonable or possible within the reasonable adjustment budget. The school's objective is to ensure that people with disabilities, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 (EqA), should be able to achieve their best and enjoy the fullest possible access to the curriculum, information and the physical environment.

**2.9** Access in the mansion to levels above the principal floor is necessarily restricted by physical constraints and related health & safety legislation, and by the need for means of evacuation in the event of fire. Access to upper levels in the Mansion gives rise to a greater level of risk than to those levels entering directly from the 'ground floor' entrance hall, or the basement. Individuals who disclose a disability may then be permitted to go to the upper levels, where they can be responded to in the event of the need for evacuation or for further assistance. At present, access to the Belvedere, and to the related parts of the park, is constrained by the topography of its setting, including the natural gradients, and by the planting, as well as by the security requirements in place to protect the building from vandalism.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Access Audit and Accessibility Report**

The processes of review of the content and provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 (EqA), and evaluation of their implications for the school have been initiated by commissioning an access audit, an accessibility report and a design review in relation to the existing situation, and the development proposals.

This accessibility report is intended to address five principal issues:

- a. Setting out the implications of the Equalities Act (EqA),
- b. Providing an audit of the accessibility of the school's existing buildings, including the mansion, and putting forward proposals for such alterations and adaptations as may reasonably be needed to respond to the provisions of the Equalities Act (EqA).
- c. Providing a design and content review of the proposals contained in the strategic development report, both at the levels of the site development plan, and the successive individual planning phases. Part of that process will require the inclusion of recommendations on preferred methods for meeting the provisions of the EqA.
- d. Providing a framework on which statements can be based for incorporation into phased planning applications relating to the school's upgrading and development,
- e. Providing a body of evidence in support of the school's defence in the event of any legal action being brought under the terms of the EqA,

f. Whilst demonstrating how the school is meeting the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 (EqA), they also wish to ensure that this information serves for both fund-raising and public relations purposes.

Results of the audit have been incorporated into the disability procedure and accessibility plan attached.

## **POLICY GUIDANCE AND STATUTE**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and plans:

### Associated policies

- Admissions policy and procedure
- Anti bullying policy
- Behaviour, rewards and sanctions policies (senior and junior schools)
- Disability procedure and accessibility procedure
- Equalities policy (exams)
- Equal opportunities for pupils
- Safeguarding incorporating child protection

### Guidance and statutes

Equality Act 2010

Equality Act 2010: Technical guidance for schools in England

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Children and Families Act 2014

Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, 2015 (last updated September 2024)

Statutory framework for the Early Years foundation January 2024

## Procedure

This procedure should be read in accordance with the disability and accessibility policy and individual needs policy and procedure.

### Definition of disability (Equality Act 2010)

“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”

The school will explore all available methods for increasing access to the curriculum, the physical environment and delivery of information and aims to anticipate future needs in the accessibility plan.

### Admissions

The school asks parents to provide full details of any learning, sensory or physical disability in respect of a prospective pupil at the time of application in order that reasonable provision may be made for all pupils to access the entrance tests and procedures. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the school may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards appropriate. Parents of a disabled or potentially disabled child are required to provide full disclosure of any medical, educational psychologist, occupational therapist or other reports regarding their child's disability, medical condition or special educational needs. Subject to this, the school will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality. Personal data will be kept secure in accordance with our data processing policy and privacy notice.

Admission to the school depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the criteria required to maintain and, if possible, to improve, the educational and general standards for all pupils commensurate with the mission as set out in the school website and prospectus. The school must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, so that there is every chance that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful school career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at the school.

The school's policy is to apply these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability.

Reference should be made in the letter offering a place at the school that should a pupil's disability become more complex in the course of time to the extent that the school were not able to provide a full and valuable education for the pupil, the parents would be advised, and discussions take place with regard to the most appropriate placements for the pupil in his/her best interest.

The school recognises the benefit to school life and education provided by its inclusive ethos and policies, however equal importance is attached to ensuring that no pupil's education is impaired by this approach and the impact on other pupils' learning is minimised. If a disability is identified after admission, the school will consult with parents about reasonable adjustments which could be made to enable the child to continue at the school.

The school provides pastoral support for all pupils. Where pupils have disabilities, support is also available through the individual needs department, care centre, school counsellors and through other external agencies.

### **Access to curriculum**

Pupils with disabilities have complete access to the curriculum, within the limitations of the constraints of the buildings and the pupils' individual capabilities. Teaching staff differentiate the delivery of lessons and their expectation of pupils' work according to individual ability and special educational needs, learning difficulty or disability. The individual needs policy outlines measures taken to assist pupils with SEND.

For pupils with disabilities to have equal access to the curriculum their specific needs are summarised on a central document, the Individual Needs Register, which is available to all teachers and support staff who are working with the pupils so that appropriate reasonable adjustments can be made in class and in school. Where appropriate, limited in-class support is available and one to one specialist lessons can be provided. In exceptional circumstances, and to support a pupil's well-being, the curriculum can be personalised.

The lay-out of the school and the design of its buildings, both historic and modern, make access to some rooms difficult and in some cases impossible for pupils with mobility and sensory problems. Planning for future improvements and careful timetabling will ameliorate some of the difficulties, but not all problem areas will be able to be remedied by reasonable adjustments short of making major alterations to physical features of the school at prohibitive cost. The site is Grade I Listed and several buildings are Grade I or II Listed. The historic nature of the site also makes it impossible for some alterations to be made.

### **Access to information**

All pupils in year 3 and above have their own laptops. This means that information is exchanged between staff and pupils in written and electronic form in ways that are user friendly and allow for ease of access, and in the form that best suits individual pupils. The ICLT department provides advice and guidance on assistive technology and software which increase access to information as well as the curriculum.

## **Access to physical environment**

Claremont Fan Court School occupies a large site of 100 acres/36 ha and as such involves a significant amount of moving around the site for lessons. Like other schools, Claremont has a number of fixed classrooms for specialist subjects and this requires pupils to move from classroom to classroom at the end of each lesson in the senior school and junior school (Stable Court).

The accessibility to the physical environment is reviewed annually to enable pupils, parents and visitors increased access to the school buildings and facilities. Improvements made and future planned changes are detailed on the attached accessibility plan.

## **Disability and accessibility committee**

The school's disability and accessibility committee consists of:

- the director of operations
- the director of individual needs in the senior school
- The head of individual needs lead in the junior school
- the head of estate and operations
- the head of marketing and admissions
- the senior nurse

and may request attendance of additional members whose expertise in any field would be of assistance.

The committee reports to the SLT that includes the school designated safeguarding lead.

The committee's terms of reference are:

- (i) to review the school's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect pupils and prospective pupils who have a disability.
- (ii) to make recommendations to the SLT and / or designated safeguarding lead with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in its many aspects to pupils or prospective pupils with disabilities by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future;
- (iii) to prepare the school's disability policy;
- (iv) to prepare the school's accessibility plan;
- (v) to meet and review such plans and policies as necessary and at least once a year.

## **Awareness and observance of the policy and accessibility plan**

The committee has considered how awareness and observance of the policy is shared and understood. The policy is made available to staff on the shared network and will be available for parents to see. Teaching staff will be regularly updated and relevant information kept in pupils' files and added to the Individual Needs register or individual pupil care plans. A planning schedule to improve accessibility (see Appendix 1) has been drawn up and will be reviewed annually.



## Accessibility Map

Available on request.