

# Disability Access Policy and Accessibility Plan



**BEDFORD**  
FREE SCHOOL

<b>Last Reviewed on:</b>	September 2023	<b>Next Review:</b>	September 2026
<b>Action plan</b>	2023-2026		

## **1. Purpose:**

- 1.1 The purpose of the policy is to ensure that Bedford Free School executes its statutory duties regarding the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2014) and meets the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).
- 1.2 The policy will ensure that:
- those pupils with a disability receive their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and appropriate inclusion in all school activities.
  - pupils with a disability are valued equally with all other pupils and will be enabled and encouraged to develop their potential to the full.
  - the organisation of the school will ensure an appropriate support framework to respond to pupil's identified needs.

## **2. Policy:**

- To ensure, wherever possible, that disability will not prevent a young person from selection if .he/she would have been selected under the school admission policy
- To respond to the individual needs of potential new admissions by seeking to implement further reasonable adjustments where that is possible.
- To make Bedford Free School as accessible as possible for pupils, staff and visitors with disabilities.

## **3. Facilities**

- Wheelchair access to reception and the school building. A ramp from street level affords access to reception and the school in general. A further ramp gives access to and from the playground area.
- Disabled toilets. There is a disabled toilet on each of the five floors.
- Access to 1st, 2nd , 3rd, and 4th floors. Two lifts located on the ground floor give access to the other floors.
- In the event of a fire evacuation chairs (evac chairs) are available for students and staff with mobility issues. Four staff have been fully trained and all staff have been made aware of procedure regarding the use of them.
- If a person is for any reason unable to use the evac chairs refuge areas located near the lifts on the 3rd and 4th floor provide a safe area to wait for firefighters to arrive. The fire doors respond to sensors in the floor and will shut immediately (in the event of a fire) ensuring that refuge areas are indeed safe, Both lifts are fire protected, and so allow firefighters access to all floors. Each floor has a fire-warden who is responsible for ensuring that students and staff with mobility issues are taken to the nearest refuge area or, (from second or first floors), moved appropriately to safety.

## **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 The ultimate responsibility for SEND/access issues rests with the Board of Governors and the Principal.
- 4.2 In the discharge of their duties the Governors will ensure:
- due regard has been taken of the Code of Practice and the Equality Act when undertaking its responsibilities;
  - funding is made available to support this policy;
  - the effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this policy.
- 4.3 The SENCo will act as Designated Disabilities Advisor and will:
- provide information and guidance to all students with disabilities;

- ensure that staff are aware of individual students and their access requirements with regards to modification/alteration of the physical classroom environment;
- ensure that staff are trained to undertake any procedures required to ensure safe and easy access to, and egress from, all areas of the school for individuals with mobility issues;  
foster positive attitudes amongst staff and students towards people with disabilities.

## **5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

5.1 The Local Governing Board is responsible for ensuring the school adheres to this policy and that this policy is periodically monitored and reviewed.

## **Bedford Free School**

### **Accessibility Plan 2023-2026**

1. This Accessibility Plan has been drawn up in consultation with the Local Authority, pupils, parents, staff and governors of the school.
2. We are committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all pupils, 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.
3. Bedford Free School plans, over time, to increase the accessibility of provision for all pupils, staff and visitors to the school. The Accessibility Plan will contain relevant actions to:
  - improve access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary. This covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education;
  - increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a disability, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with a disability are as, equally, prepared for life as are the able-bodied pupils. This covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits. It also covers the provision of specialist aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum;
  - improve the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities. Examples might include handouts, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events. The information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable time frame;
5. Attached are Action Plans, relating to these key aspects of accessibility. These plans will be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis. New Plans will be drawn up every three years.
6. We acknowledge that there is a need for ongoing awareness raising and training for staff and governors in the matter of disability discrimination and the need to inform attitudes on this matter.
7. The Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with the following policies, strategies and documents:

- Curriculum
- Equality
- Staff Development
- Health & Safety (including off-site safety)
- Special Needs
- Behaviour
- School Development Plan
- School Prospectus and Mission Statement
- Teaching and Learning Policy

8. The Action Plan for physical accessibility relates to the Access Audit of the School. It may not be feasible to undertake some of the works during the life of this first Accessibility Plan and therefore some items will roll forward into subsequent plans. The audit 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.
9. The Plan will be monitored through the Local Governing Board.

### Bedford Free School Accessibility Plan 2023-2026

The initial Access Audit was carried out by Lucy Taylor in February 2019 and a number of recommendations made:

<b>Improving the Physical Access at Bedford Free School</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Cost £</b>
Disabled parking space	Relocate picnic bench to provide disabled parking opposite ramp	By start summer term 2019 <b>completed</b>	0
Disabled parking space	Line markings for disabled parking space	By start summer term 2019 <b>completed</b>	100
Lighting	Upgrade all lighting to LED	Ongoing rolling programme	++
Corridors	Monitor flow in narrower areas	Ongoing	0

The update of the audit carried out by J Lewis 12 October 2023

<b>Improving the Physical Access at Bedford Free School</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Cost £</b>
Disabled parking space	On-ground disabled line markings and sign paintwork to be refreshed	By September 2024	100
lighting	upgrade to LED lighting as and when T5 needs replacing	Ongoing rolling programme	++
corridors	monitoring of flow	ongoing	0

Accessibility at Bedford Free School				
Area	Accessibility Review/Audit			
Access & Egress	Access & Egress is provided by steps or a steep ramp at the front of the building. Better access is available at the side of the building via a shallow ramp with a width of 1250mm. Ramped access is not available on the library or rear stairs however the entire building is accessible from the door that does have ramp access.			
Internal doors	All internal doors meet the minimum width of 800mm with many being 900mm Corridors are served by double fire doors which are held open unless the fire alarm sounds at which point they will close. Doors have vision panels in both the top and bottom half of the doors so wheelchair users have visibility through them.			
Lighting	Much of the building is served by large windows to provide plenty of natural light. The internal lighting is currently undergoing an upgrade to LEDs. Some areas are still served by T5 lighting which is sufficient, but will be improved.			
Corridors	The width of corridors varies from 1500mm – to 2550mm Corridors where lockers are should be 2700mm wide and we are a little narrower than this (2550mm) however movement around the building is tightly managed and monitored by staff so I do not feel this is a major problem.			
Visual Contrast	There is good visual contrast between the wall colour and the floor colour and also between the stair coverings and the stair nosings on all stairs and external steps.			
Accessibility btw floors	We have two main passenger lifts that serve all floors. We have a separate platform lift allowing access to the new extension on the third floor.			
Washrooms	We have an accessible washroom on every floor. The lights are activated by sensors and the taps are levers so can be used with a closed fist and grab rails are provided. We also have emergency pull cords in each accessible washroom.			
Emergency Situations	In the case of an emergency we have evac chairs stationed on the three main stairwells and staff trained in their use. <b>Current Training certificates issued 4.09.23 and valid until 4.09.26.</b> There is an emergency pull cord in each washroom which sounds an alarm. PEEPS are put in place for all students and staff who may need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation and all visitors are asked on arrival if they would require additional assistance and a plan is put in place			
Improving the Curriculum Access at Bedford Free School				
Target	Strategy	Outcome	Timeframe	Achievement
Training for teachers on differentiating the curriculum	Continuing audit of staff training requirements to ensure new staff have the level of training required.	All teachers are able to more fully meet the requirements of disabled children's needs with regards to accessing the curriculum. Meeting time is devoted to sharing of good practise/differentiated resources.	Ongoing	Increase in access to the National Curriculum. Needs of all pupils are met

Training for teachers on differentiating the curriculum	Review the specific needs for pupils living with a disability, in terms of basic daily living skills, relationships and future aspirations.	Teachers are aware of the relevant issues and can ensure that this group has equality of access to life-preparation learning. The use of other professional partners has been made available.	Ongoing	Needs of all pupils are met. Good progress made by all learners
All out-of-school activities are planned to ensure the participation of the whole range of pupils	Continue to ensure all out-of-school provision is compliant with legislation	All out-of-school activities will be conducted in an inclusive environment with providers that comply with all current and future legislative requirements	Ongoing	Increase in access to all school activities for all disabled pupils
Classrooms are optimally organised to promote the participation and independence of all pupils	Continue to review and implement a preferred layout of furniture and equipment to support the learning process in individual class bases	Lessons start on time without the need to make adjustments to accommodate the needs of individual pupils. All pupils are included in the learning	Ongoing	Increase in access to the National Curriculum Needs of all pupils are met
Training for Awareness Raising of Disability Issues	Ongoing provision of training for governors, staff, pupils and parents  Staff encouraged to bring any disability access issues to the attention of the Principal	Whole school community aware of issues relating to Access	Ongoing	Society will benefit by a more inclusive school and social environment. Diverse needs of all pupils are recognised and celebrated.
<b>Improving the Delivery of Written Information at Bedford Free School</b>				
<b>Target</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
Availability of written material in alternative formats	The school will make itself aware of the services available for converting written information into alternative formats as required	The school will be able to provide written information in different formats when required for individual purposes as required	Ongoing	Delivery of information to pupils improved
Make available school prospectus and other information for parents and carers on website and in paper format	Review current school publications and promote the availability in different formats	All school information available for all	Ongoing	Delivery of school information to parents and the local community improved



Continue to be aware that documents may need to be enlarged to ensure accessibility for pupils with visual impairment	Continue to update advice on alternative formats and use of IT software to produce customised materials as required	All school information available for all as required	Ongoing	Delivery of school information to pupils & parents with visual difficulties improved.
Ensure that parents and carers receive information from school in a format of their choice as far as this is possible	Survey parents to gain information regarding their choice of format (paper or email communications)	Parents and carers will receive information in the medium of their choice	Ongoing	School is more effective in meeting the communication choices of parents and carers. Staff will be aware of preferred format for communications amongst parents/carers
Ensure that all school communications use plain English	A member of SLT to check all communications to parents/carers before distribution	All communications will be easy to read and have clarity of purpose	Ongoing	Parents and carers will be clear as to purpose of communications