



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Accessibility Plan (Incorporating Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy)

Birkenhead School is an independent school which educates and cares for children aged 3 months to 18 years old. The School is academically selective and welcomes all children who can flourish through its curriculum and the many other opportunities the School offers to give children the best possible start in life. It is our aim to enable all students whose academic ability is appropriate to the education the School offers to have equal access to all aspects of that education, as far as is reasonable and possible, and as far as is compatible with the effective education of other children and the reasonable use of resources. The School delivers education in the classroom, sports and other facilities alongside excellent pastoral care and many opportunities outside the curriculum including a wide range of educational visits away from the School's campus.

Treating every child as an individual is important to us. Students with physical disabilities are welcome, as are those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) who have the aptitude to benefit from our curriculum (and assuming we are able to provide the help and support they require).

To this end the School keeps under review the School's policies, procedures and facilities in so far as to seek to maximise accessibility to the education it provides. This includes consideration of the potential impact of disability on current or prospective students, the costs of education and support for specific learning needs.

Our accessibility plan involves the following areas, which should all be read in the context of the School's approach to providing reasonable adjustments (see Appendix A):

1. Admissions
2. Access to the physical environment of the School
3. Access for students with specific learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities (SEND) to the School curriculum
4. Access to information

It is supplemented with the facilities audit considering physical disabilities and access (Appendix B) and an outline of various modifications to the service provision that are likely to assist those with particular disabilities and/or special educational needs (Appendix C). Finally, a list of resources used/consulted in the preparation of the policy is attached at Appendix D.

Admissions

Birkenhead School selects its students on the basis of their academic aptitude and their ability to benefit from the curriculum offered by the setting. While our Early Years Foundation Stage is required to be fully inclusive, it is important that staff are able to accept children on the basis of the setting being able to provide appropriate and reasonable support for the child to make expected progress. In applying criteria for selection the School intends to maintain and, if possible to improve, the educational and general standards for all its students commensurate with the ethos to which the School aspires. The School must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective student to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the student's peers, so that there is every chance that the student will have a complete, happy and successful school career. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the student's time at the School.

Suitability for entry to the Prep and Early Years department varies according to age but may include one or more of the following: assessment via tests, examination of school work, a day spent with a class in school, references from current school.

Academic suitability for Seniors is assessed at age 11+ via an entrance examination during Assessment Days, or, at other points of entry through a "Taster Day" during which the candidate will be observed in a classroom setting, undertake VR, Mathematical and Literacy tests, and have a short interview with a senior member of staff. Reports and/or references from candidates' present schools are also requested. Academic suitability for entrance to the Sixth Form is via interview, school reports and GCSE performance.

The School's policy is to apply these admissions criteria to all students and potential students regardless of any disability of which it is aware, making reasonable adjustment to the processes where required to support children, as far as is possible, in order for them to achieve their full potential.

As such, parents of prospective students are asked, on application to the School, to inform the Headmaster of any disabilities or long-term medical conditions and the implications thereof which the School should consider, either in the selection process or once a student has been accepted. In assessing any student or prospective student, and in considering any reasonable adjustments it might need to make, the School will seek relevant advice and may require additional assessments from external professionals where it regards as appropriate. Subject to this, the School will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

Reasonable adjustments to the admissions procedure which the School will consider will depend on individual circumstances but might include provision of enlarged copies of examination papers, extra time allowance, use of personal computer, use of non-standard furniture, special arrangements to take medication during the examination, change of room to provide access to appropriate facilities.

Access to the physical environment of the School

Birkenhead School was established in 1871 at its current location and it covers a wide area – primarily on one campus, with two additional sports facilities. It consists of many separate buildings, some built recently with the needs of people with disabilities directly considered. However, there are also many older buildings, including listed buildings and those with several storeys.

The School, in common with many others, has established fixed classrooms for a number of subjects enabling the concentration of specialist resources and facilities in one place. It is recognised that a student with impaired mobility is likely to be put at a disadvantage by this approach. An audit of accessibility (see Appendix B) indicates where problems lie and where reasonable adjustments can be made to improve access to some facilities. There remain some areas where major alterations would be required at a cost which would make a serious impact on the School's financial resources and its ability

to fund the education of all its students. Where developments of the School estate are undertaken opportunities will be taken to further improve accessibility: we remain committed to providing the best possible environment for our students.

Within the physical education aspects of the School's curriculum and other activities, the offering will be modified to include those with disabilities wherever possible. It is recognised, however, that this may not be possible in all aspects (e.g. some elements of team sports) depending upon the needs, the staffing levels and the activity.

In terms of general access to the School, this is greatly assisted by the presence of a full-time School Nurse who not only provides immediate care but works with students, parents and other staff to ensure that known medical conditions have the appropriate measures in place. This helps ensure that access to the School's curriculum and activities are not hindered by most medical conditions. The School Catering Team work closely with parents via the School Nurse to provide for special dietary needs.

Access for students with specific learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities (SEND) to the School curriculum

Birkenhead School provides a high quality of educational provision through a strong and varied curriculum delivered in a range of classrooms, playrooms and sports settings, supported by excellent pastoral care, an extensive co-curricular programme and educational visits. All our children benefit from the provision enabled by high quality teaching with relatively small class/key group sizes and, in particular, a high level of differentiated teaching. This enables individual learning for all, including those with particular needs such as learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We recognise that further support may be required for some children to fully access this provision.

We have high aspirations and expectations for all children in our School. These are best supported through clear communications and a mutual vision between parents and the School. Our approach involves seeking to identify learning needs at an early stage wherever possible and always listening to, and working with, parents who consider their child has a need for particular support. We assess children at various stages of their education to ensure that progress is at least at the expected level. Observations on progress and individual needs will be discussed sensitively with parents. Further professional advice can be sought where required to clarify children's needs and the School will work with professionals who can assist.

The School undertakes to adapt its curriculum wherever possible to the individual needs of students. Special Educational Needs requirements are established by the SEND Co-ordinators in Prep (including Nursery) and Seniors. They maintain and update a SEND Register (Prep, including Nursery, also maintain a 'monitoring list') which provides summary reports/assessments/advice with access to full assessments and other documentation for staff. The SEND Co-ordinators, alongside the full time School Nurse, play a crucial role where health matters and SEND are involved, liaising with parents, caring for students and educating teaching staff. Some of the steps likely to be appropriate upon the identification of specific educational needs and disabilities are listed at Appendix C.

The school follows a graduated approach to support starting with personalised planning in the form of Play Plans, Individual Education Plans or Pupil Profiles. Those with a higher level of need will have Additional Support Plans (ASPs) or Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) and multi-agency meetings are held whenever appropriate, involving pastoral and teaching staff, learning support staff, parents and outside agencies.

We endeavour to ensure that all areas of the curriculum including the Early Years Foundation Stage, are accessible to each student. As children progress through the school, we accept that they may not be able or choose not to study as many subjects as might originally have been intended, particularly in the

years involving preparation for, and the taking of, public examinations. Specially tailored timetables can sometimes be arranged for students with more serious disabilities or learning difficulties.

In addition to provision within the classroom to ensure accessibility to the curriculum, the School has specially qualified staff who can provide the additional service of individual tuition on such things as study skills and revision approaches as well as complementing core curricular teaching. They are qualified to tutor those with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and dyscalculia. These sessions are provided on the basis of a published termly fee, which is subsidised by general fee income in recognition of the value to the wider School community of this contribution to an inclusive approach.

Access to information

The School recognises the importance of information flow between teachers/other staff, parents and students in order to ensure the best, supported educational progress within the School for each student. It prides itself on the level of personal communication undertaken and responsiveness to individual enquiries and requests wherever practical.

Some aspects of access to information are also included in the appendices indicating measures that can support specific educational needs. Others include:

1. The provision of classroom media projectors and interactive whiteboards.
2. Photocopies/ Electronic copies of information for those for whom transcribing takes considerable time. Electronic resources are available via the School network.
3. Extensive Wi-Fi and use of personal tablet devices (“Bring Your Own Device”) has recently been implemented in Seniors and will increasingly be part of the educational offering. Where necessary access to school laptops has also been provided in Prep.
4. Seeking to improve the information available on the school website or VLE (Virtual Learning Environment), which already includes all letters, menus, timetable and homework information. In the EYFS, termly agendas are accessible online as well being hand delivered to parents. This can then be accessed in large font on screen.
5. We will ensure that the School website and internal network sites are clearly presented and easy to use.
6. Office staff are available throughout the School day to provide information verbally. We have a home access computer network for staff, parents and students. For students who are absent from school or need more time with information, this means that all networked resources (lesson/revision/homework materials, etc.) can be accessed from home. The resource bank for students will continue to grow. Parents can also access reports, grades, timetable (curriculum and homework) and other materials to enable them to both support and monitor their child’s progress.
7. Pre-Prep and Reception currently use iTrack, which is an electronic learning Journal, which will be available for parents to track and view online.

Reasonable Adjustments

Birkenhead School is committed to treating its students and applicants fairly, in line with the Equality Act 2010 alongside other regulations and guidance. Furthermore, the Equality Act 2010 confirms a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students and applicants are not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with students and applicants who are not disabled.

The Act defines disability as suffering from a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The School seeks to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled students and applicants are not put at a substantial disadvantage in receiving the education and services provided by the School. These involve reasonable adjustments:

- a. to our policies, criteria and practices – the way we do things; and
- b. by providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. additional support or assistance)

Examples of such are provided in the following pages relating to admissions, physical access and learning needs. There can, however, be no standard definition, and, while striving to identify needs and deciding upon adjustments the School welcomes the involvement of parents in discussions. Parents should meet and discuss their child's need with the SEND Co-ordinator in Nursery, Prep or Seniors and together we will identify the proposed adjustment and how the School could reasonably put it into practice. The School, as the education provider through staff with considerable qualifications and experience, retains the primacy to make the final decisions on provision.

When the School is able to agree with proposed adjustments they will be put into place promptly. In other cases, for example where the adjustment would be logistically complex or a considerable financial cost, greater consideration of how best to overcome any substantial disadvantage that might otherwise be suffered may be required, as well as the measures it is reasonable for the School to take. The School may seek input on these decisions from teachers, other external agencies, as well as the child involved and their parents.

When considering whether it would be reasonable to make a particular adjustment, the School will consider the following factors:

- the extent to which it would overcome the substantial disadvantage the disabled child is suffering
- the practicability of the adjustment
- the effect of the disability on the pupil
- the cost of the proposed adjustment
- whether it will be provided under an Educational Health Care Plan or support from an external authority.
- the School's resources (provided primarily by fee income)
- health and safety requirements
- the need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards
- the interests of other students (and potential students)

Where a decision is made not to provide a requested adjustment, the School will write to the parents involved setting out the decision and the reasons. Parents/Guardians of a disabled child will not be charged for any reasonable adjustments.

Facilities Accessibility Audit

External access to campus is level, although some entrances are gravelled. Stable access: Dining Hall/Chapel/Prep; Overdale; K Block; Sixth Form Building (rear); Little School; Pre-Prep; Prep Gym; Prep New Building (2009); Old School House.

An advantage of the School site is that there is direct vehicle access to a large number of buildings: Nursery; Pre-Prep; New Prep Building; main entrance of old Prep building; Music School; Prep Gym; Dining Hall; Chapel; Library; Overdale; Science and Technology; Bushell Hall; McAllester Building; Sixth Form Building (rear); Sports Hall.

Most buildings have both internal and external level changes. Most changes of level outdoors can be avoided by taking alternative routes (e.g. K Block). Some surfaces need improvement (e.g. path alongside Sports Hall).

Our experience of providing for the needs of physically disabled students has largely been through the experience of students temporarily disabled through injury and this has provided a useful model. Reasonable adjustments have been made to timetables and rooming, in consultation with the member of staff and/or student concerned and his or her parents to ensure that no-one is placed at a substantial disadvantage. Arrangements have also been made to avoid students having to carry books and equipment around the campus, through the use of designated carriers, for example, or by providing spare sets of books in relevant classrooms.

The issue of access is relevant not only to possible disabled students, but to disabled prospective students and their parents who may wish to visit the School on Open Days or at other times. The definition of what is reasonable will be different for each case. The School will gather advance information in order to be able to consider reasonable adjustments. A number of temporary wooden ramps have been constructed and are available to be put into future use.

Sections in bold indicate no disabled access and no obvious “reasonable adjustments”.

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Library	Yes – one step ramp required	Entrance via fire door also possible (level access)		As required
Library Careers Room	Yes			
Meeting Room (exams, assemblies)	No	Exams and assemblies/meetings could be held in Hall	No	As required

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Overdale classrooms	No	K-Block classrooms	At considerable cost access might be provided to ground floor classrooms; toilet is then accessible	Long
Overdale indoor recreation facilities	No			
Overdale outdoor recreation facilities	Yes			
New Science	Ground Floor (Ramp) Not 1st Floor	Lower floor labs identical to upper floor		As required
New Science Toilet	Yes – designated disabled toilet			
Old Science - Physics	External access via New Science block & Physics Prep Room	Temporary external ramp – 3 steps; use double door		As required
–Technology Labs	No external access; internal levels ok		Temporary external ramp – 3 steps; use double door	As required
Old Science - Chemistry (1st Floor)	No	Ground Floor labs could be used for many lessons		As required
Old Science toilets	No	New Science, 6th Form, Bushell Hall or Library close at hand		
Sixth Form facilities / English Classrooms	Direct access rear (canteen), but then internal steps to access main rooms. No access to upper floors	Ramps can be provided to rear door(s), giving access to all ground floor rooms, except the overflow study/storage room		As required

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Sixth Form Cafeteria	Yes			
Sixth Form Toilets	Disabled toilet accessible at ground level	Female and male toilets also available in Hall adjacent.		
Economics	No	K Block or other classrooms have the same facilities.		As required
Bushell Hall	Yes		Small half-step at door – temporary ramp	
Hall Toilet	Yes - plus separate disabled facility			
Languages & Classics	No	Alternative classrooms available, with It modification for some lessons		
McAllester Common Rooms, etc.	No			
Art rooms	No			
K-Block – 6 ground floor classrooms	Yes – from east end			
K-Block toilets	Yes, although not adapted			
K-Block – four 1st floor classrooms + Computer Suite	No	Computing could be taught in DT area.	Hoist/chair lift would give access to key facility plus extra classrooms which might then provide flexibility elsewhere. Plan for mods to this building in due course – could include lift	Long
Playgrounds	Yes			
Sports Hall – ground floor areas	Yes			

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Sports Hall – gallery, fitness suite	No	Some equipment is movable to the ground floor		
Pavilion	No	Facilities available in neighbouring Sports Hall		
Pre-Prep	Yes			
Pre-Prep toilet	Yes			
Little School	Yes	Some classrooms have direct access from outside, including Reception		
Little School toilet	Yes			
Old School House	No	Ramps would be required at front door to main house. Classes could be relocated to Little School		As required
Prep Gym	Yes			
Prep Gym changing room	Yes			
New Prep Building	Yes – ground floor only. Computer room on First floor not accessible		IT facilities can be made available elsewhere due to increased network	
Years 3-6 toilets	Yes, but no specific disabled toilet		Convert present adult toilet to disabled access	Long
Year 3/4	No	Classrooms are flexible; classes can be moved		As required
Big School entrance Hall, Staff	Yes – via New Building			

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Room, Medical Centre				
Staff Toilet	Yes			
Prep Hall, Art Room	No	Relocation of lessons / activities where possible to other classrooms / Bushell Hall / Chapel	Installation of handrails undertaken but lift / stair lift impractical in listed building.	No plans
Year 6 classrooms	Yes – from Chapel End			
Uniform Shop	Yes			
Dining Hall	Yes - via Beresford Road or ramp from School Field; one step into Hall		Solid path needed along jumping track at bottom of Field to link main path with ramp. Temporary ramp required at entrance door	Long As required
Dining Hall toilets	No.	Toilet in kitchen can be accessed on same level		
Chapel	No – external access to vestibule enables service to be heard; but then internal steps	A temporary access ramp is available		
Music Dept	No	No	Installation of lift appears impractical in this listed Victorian building	-
McAllester Pavilion	Yes.	The pavements are wheel chair adapted, but gravel entrance:		

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
		vehicle can be brought to solid paved surface.		
McAllester Field pitches.	Yes, via soft grassed surface or via Townfield Lane entrance & path		Complete hard link from pitch entrance to present path	Long
Noctorum Field	Field – Yes Pavilion - No		Temporary ramp could be provided to provide access	As required
Nursery	Yes: Ramp to the doors and ground floor access for wheelchairs from the entrance via the garden. Also access from the Under 2's room to the garden. Fun Club and Toddlers rooms: No	Toddlers room and fun club on the first floor of the building can be accessed by small children by using an evacuation chair. Handrails and non-slip edges have been attached to stairs to assist.	Costings for stair lift and elevators has been sought.	Long Term if need arises
Nursery Toilet	Downstairs toilets available		Costings to convert into a disabled toilet has been sought	Long Term if need arises

LEARNING DIFFICULTY / DISABILITY	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE / CONSIDERED	TERM
Visual impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print books / online materials. • Coloured paper available • Stair cases all have non-slip edging. • Enlarged worksheets and exam papers. • Use of ICT with image magnification. • Clear signage on buildings and classroom doors. • Improved lighting in classrooms. • Amanuensis/readers for examinations. • Voice recognition programmes. 	Most already available – lighting improvement is a continuing programme.
Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to sit near front of classroom; use of voice enhancement devices as appropriate. • British Sign Language and Makaton are used in EYFS 	As required
Other physical disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist furniture to be considered for individual need – building up future stock as required. • Current equipment includes Breezi Chairs being used in Prep and a Z-Chair in Nursery 	
Diabetes and other life-threatening medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nurse available throughout school day, developing individual care plans • Staff trained to deal with critical incidents, administer medication, etc. • Staff given clear instructions on dealing with critical incidents. • Parents allowed to accompany children on trips if necessary • Caterers work with Nurse and parents to accommodate dietary needs • Large notices with photos alerting staff are posted in staff rooms. • All staff in Nursery are fully trained in Paediatric First Aid. 	Now
General Learning Difficulty measures (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification through internal informal observations and assessments in early years and Prep along with more formal assessments as they progress through the school. 	

<p>dyscalculia, ADHD, autistic spectrum)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers provided with suitable teaching strategies for the classroom. • Transition planning with pastoral staff when moving between Year groups and Key Stages. • Extra time/assistance / computers given in examinations in accordance with guidelines. • Regular meetings with parents, students and key staff to review progress and adjust strategies where needed. • Discussions with external professionals e.g., EYFS early intervention officers, Occupational therapists, speech therapists etc. • Additional tuition is available from trained specialist teachers, usually at an additional charge, where parents wish to take this option. • Regular professional development for staff on SEND <p>Whole School Study Skills programme from Year 7 upwards in order to best equip students to cope with our curriculum and to develop lifelong skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing development of diagnostic assessments offered in school e.g. Lucid Exact, QB Check 	<p>Annual training provided on a variety of SEND needs (mixture of internal and external inputs)</p> <p>Further development to involve more year groups and specific inclusion in some subject lessons (to be considered for September 2021)</p>
<p>Dyslexia</p>	<p>Additional modifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All School-created paper materials for students on cream/ivory paper. • Students encouraged to use laptops in school from early age. • Coloured overlays were appropriate (Irlen's syndrome) 	
<p>Dyspraxia</p>	<p>Additional modifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Co-ordinator facilitates assessments and provides information for staff • Support strategies put in place to help organisation via Head of Year, Class Teacher and SEND Co-ordinator: (Wherever possible) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ second set of textbooks at home ○ use of a laptop/device in lessons to type notes ○ handouts given in advance of the lesson ○ equipment checklist for home and school to fill in on a daily basis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multi-Agency Meetings with relevant staff and specialists as needed. 	
Autistic spectrum	<p>Additional modifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With parental consent referral made by School Nurse with the support of SEND Co-ordinator to CAMHS. ● Input to support development of social skills. ● Nurture Group is available at lunchtimes for children in Prep. Yrs 3-6. ● 1:1 sessions provided at particular times when necessary. ● Multi-Agency Meetings with relevant staff and specialists as needed. ● EYFS: with consultation with school nurse, Manager, SENDCo and parents a referral can be made to the 0-19 Health and Well-Being Service. 	
ADHD	<p>Additional modifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Referral made in conjunction with School Nurse with the support of SENDCo to Community Paediatric Team and Occupational Therapy. ● School Nurse to assist with day-time medication if needed. ● The use of a person to prompt return to concentration. ● Chunking of activities and support with organisation. ● Multi-Agency Meetings with relevant staff and specialists as needed. ● EYFS: with consultation with school nurse, Manager, SENDCo and parents a referral can be made to the 0-19 Health and Well-Being Service. 	
Prolonged or regular absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning Resources containing lesson materials, revision resources and homework. ● Parent Portal providing information on timetable and homework set ● Work collected and marked with support from the school office 	Now

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced curriculum may be agreed • Special access arrangements for public examinations e.g. sitting the exams at home, rest breaks, extra time (in accordance with JCQ guidelines). 	
Mental Health Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and support from pastoral team involved with the child led by School Nurse, SEND Co-ordinator and/or Head of Year when appropriate. • Referrals made by School Nurse to CAMHS and or Health Services in Schools Team. • Reduced curriculum may be agreed. • Consideration given to homework load with possibility to not require a student to hand in work until they are well. • If regularly absent, arrangements to be made to collect and mark work from the school office. • Multi-Agency Meetings with relevant staff and specialists as needed. • Transition planning when moving between Year groups and Key Stages. • Raising general awareness through school PSHE programme and Mental Health Peer Mentor Scheme. • Nurture group available at lunchtimes in Prep for year 3-6 along with opportunities for 1:1 Sessions with the school nurse. 	Advice from Health Services in Schools Team.

Regulations and Guidance considered in the formation / review of this policy

- Equality Act 2010 (General provisions and Schedule 11)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- What Equality Law Means for You as an Education Provider: Schools
- Schools Technical Guidance
- Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils
- Department for Education
- The Equality Act 2010 and schools
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Independent Schools Bursars' Association (including assistance from Farrer and Co.)
- Independent Schools Inspectorate Handbook for the Inspection of Independent Schools – The Regulatory Requirements
- Online materials published by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

HM 22nd October 2020. To be reviewed September 2021