

Disabled Pupils and the Equality Act: Accessibility Plans, PEEPs and Auxiliary Aids

Under the Equality Act 2010 (EA) schools are required to make sure that they consider equalities issues. This is referred to as the general duty. They also have to:

- publish information updated at least once a year that shows how they are meeting their equalities responsibilities.
- prepare and publish equality objectives at least once every four years.

(The first publication date for these two duties was 6th April 2012)

Under this law, schools are expected to meet their responsibilities for disabled pupils through an Accessibility Plan. The school's equality objectives should–

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- improve the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided
- improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

The Accessibility Plan

This plan:

- may be a free standing document or it may be contained in another document such as the school's development plan;
- will require adequate resources in order to be implemented and schools need to bear this in mind;
- should be reviewed every three years
- may be reviewed in OFSTED inspections

The Council has a role in advising schools and providing them with support to meet their equalities responsibilities. This support may be provided by the Support for Learning Service. The Council also asks schools to provide information about their current level of physical accessibility for both the Local Offer and on their own websites.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

For children and adults who need assistance in the event of a fire or other emergency, schools are expected to provide a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs). The Council helps schools by providing them with advice about PEEPs, buying safety equipment (e.g. Evacuation Chairs) and training in the safe evacuation of disabled people.

Equipment, Adaptations and Services

Following consultation on implementation and approach, a further duty came into force on 1 September 2012 which extends the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to provide equipment (auxiliary aids) and services to disabled pupils. For schools the duty is summarised as follows:

Where something a school does places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

Schools will be expected to provide an auxiliary aid or service for a disabled pupil when it would be reasonable to do so and if such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces in comparison to non-disabled pupils. At the simplest level this could be providing a pen grip to aid a pupils' handwriting. This also includes the provision of specialist equipment to ensure access to the curriculum for disabled pupils or those with sensory impairment, for example; in Tower Hamlets some equipment is provided through a statement or education, health and care plan but there is also a budget kept centrally by the Council to cover exceptional equipment needs.

Children With a Medical Condition

From April of 2014 schools have legal responsibilities relating to children who have a long term medical condition. The main points are:

- Pupils at school with medical conditions should be properly supported so that they have full access to education, including school trips and physical education.
- Governing bodies **must** ensure that arrangements are in place in schools to support pupils at school with medical conditions.
- Governing bodies should ensure that school leaders consult health and social care professionals, pupils and parents to ensure that the needs of children with medical conditions are effectively supported.

Tower Hamlets have advisors for primary and secondary schools within the Support for Learning Service that support schools with developing policy and practice in this area. Within the Local Offer they are called the Advisory Teachers For Children With A Disability & Severe Medical Conditions.

References

Statutory policies and plans for schools –

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357068/statutory_schools_policies_Sept_14_FINAL.pdf

Guidance on reasonable adjustment for disabled pupils -

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/reasonable-adjustments-disabled-pupils>

Tower Hamlets Local Offer Factsheet



Contact Details for Further Information

Family Information Service

30 Greatorex St

London

E1 5NP

020 7364 6495

fis@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This service operates a drop -in at Greatorex St from Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

Parents Advice Centre

30 Greatorex St

London

E1 5NP

020 7364 6489

pac@towerhamlets.gov.uk

This service operates a drop -in at Greatorex St on
Tuesdays and Fridays 9.30am - 3pm
Wednesdays 4-6pm for young people and working parents.

Support for Learning Service

229 Bethnal Green Road

London

E2 6AB

020 7364 6440

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