**Accessibility Policy**

St Laurence in Thanet Church of England Junior Academy



This set of values is reflected in all our policies.

Joy Hope Forgiveness Love Resilience

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| **Approved by:** | S.Graham | **Date:** 17thMay 2024 |
| **Last reviewed on:** | 17th May 2024 | |
| **Next review due by:** | 17th May 2027 | |

**Rationale**

At St Laurence in Thanet CE Junior Academy, we recognise our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that disabled students have equal access to education and associated services. We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where every student, regardless of disability, can thrive academically and socially. Our policy is driven by the principles of equal opportunities as outlined in the National Curriculum Inclusion statement. In planning and teaching the National Curriculum, teachers ensure they have due regard for the setting of suitable and challenging learning objectives, respond to pupils’ diverse needs and aim to overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for all pupils. Our school values of love, forgiveness, joy, hope, and resilience underpin our commitment to promoting equality and inclusion.

* Love: We believe in showing love and compassion towards one another, embracing diversity, and celebrating the unique qualities that each individual brings to our community. Love drives us to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels accepted and supported.
* Forgiveness: Forgiveness teaches us the importance of empathy and understanding. We recognise that everyone makes mistakes and that forgiveness allows us to move forward together, free from judgment and prejudice. By practicing forgiveness, we promote a culture of reconciliation and acceptance.
* Joy: Joy is contagious and inclusive. We strive to create an atmosphere filled with positivity and happiness, where every member of our school community feels a sense of belonging and finds joy in learning and growing together.
* Hope: Hope inspires us to believe in a better future where equality and inclusion are not just aspirations but realities. We instil hope in our students by fostering an environment where dreams are nurtured, opportunities are accessible to all, and barriers are overcome through collective effort and determination.
* Resilience: Resilience is the key to overcoming challenges and adversity. We empower our students to develop resilience, to stand up against discrimination and injustice, and to advocate for equality and inclusion both within our school community and beyond.

The school parable of the lost sheep further reinforces our commitment to equality and inclusion. In this story, a shepherd leaves the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that is lost. This parable teaches us the value of every individual and the importance of inclusivity. Just as the shepherd does not give up until he finds the lost sheep, we too are dedicated to ensuring that no one is left behind or excluded.

**Aims**

Our school aims to treat all its pupils fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all pupils without discrimination of any kind. Our accessibility policy is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

* increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum,
* improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school
* improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The plan will be made available online on the school website, and paper copies are available upon request. Our school is also committed to ensuring staff are trained in equality issues with reference to the Equality Act 2010, including understanding disability issues. The school supports any available partnerships to develop and implement the plan. We have included a range of stakeholders in the development of this accessibility plan, including parents, staff and governors of the school.

Our school’s complaints procedure covers the accessibility plan. If you have any concerns relating to accessibility in school, the complaints procedure sets out the process for raising these concerns.

**Legislation and guidance**

This document meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ adverse effect on their ability to undertake normal day to day activities.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, ‘long-term’ is defined as ‘a year or more’ and ‘substantial’ is defined as ‘more than minor or trivial’. The definition includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Schools are required to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ for pupils with disabilities under the Equality Act 2010, to alleviate any substantial disadvantage that a pupil with disabilities faces in comparison with a pupil without disabilities. This can include, for example, the provision of an auxiliary aid or adjustments to premises.

**Action Plan**

Curriculum Access:

* Providing staff with information and training to support the individual needs of disabled students.
* Offering adapted lessons and activities to cater to diverse learning styles and abilities.
* Ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to participate in arts, sports, and other extracurricular activities.
* Accommodating disabled students' pace and challenges while maintaining high expectations for their achievement.
* Incorporating alternative experiences into lesson planning when specific curriculum activities are inaccessible to disabled students.
* Planning school visits with consideration for each student's requirements.
* Promoting the use of appropriate technology, such as ICT, to facilitate learning for students with disabilities.
* Developing care plans in collaboration with parents and students to address medical needs.
* Striving to remove all barriers to learning and participation.
* Planning for withdrawal areas to provide a quiet area for specific individuals and a quiet workspace for small groups of children. (To be included in any new build plans).

Physical Accessibility:

* Providing accessible toilet facilities.
* Clearly labelling signage for easy wayfinding.
* Maintaining well-lit and hazard-free environments.
* Implementing inclusive emergency and evacuation procedures.
* Ensuring flexibility in classroom allocation to accommodate all students.
* Ensure flexibility in classroom allocation to allow access for pupils to all areas of the school facilities.
* Review emergency and evacuation procedures for wheelchair access.
* Improve the flooring in classrooms to contrast with walls and furniture and the colour of walls to contrast with doorways when internal redecoration is carried out.
* Provide for the social inclusion of all pupils through Buddy / Playground Helper system.
* Provide for the social inclusion of all pupils through the setting up of the lunchtime club.

Information Accessibility:

* Reviewing and updating the school website to ensure it is accessible to all users.
* Providing information in alternative formats such as alternative languages.
* Ensuring that all communication within and from the school promotes non-discrimination, accessibility, and equality.

**Checklist for Staff**

All staff will need to consider the following:

* Prioritising the identification of specific needs and requirements of disabled pupils and parents.
* Conducting access audits in classrooms and departments to identify and address obstacles.
* Ensuring classrooms and corridors are arranged for easy access.
* Planning lessons to accommodate potential delays and varied formats of homework for disabled pupils.
* Exploring and utilising specialist equipment to support disabled students.
* Considering accessibility in all aspects of school life, including trips, disciplinary procedures, lunchtime clubs, and fire drill arrangements.
* Promoting inclusivity and understanding among students and staff.
* Not centring the focus solely on the disabled pupil.
* Avoiding frustration when making arrangements for the benefit of one child.
* Educating the class about consideration, such as the potential hazards of a shoulder bag hitting a student in a wheelchair, and discussing differences sensitively on a need-to-know basis.
* Allowing extra time for disabled pupils to use equipment during practical work.
* Incorporating positive representations of disabled people in displays, films, photographs, literature, and television.
* Engaging a disabled pupil in school council activities, house teams, etc.

**Physical Access Currently in Place at 2024 Audit**

To assist children and adults with physical access to the school environment the following facilities are in place:

* Accessible car park – The car park is accessible to all.
* Classroom access – all rooms are fully accessible to wheelchair users.
* Sanitary conveniences – Toilet facilities for the disabled are provided
* Signage and way finding – fire exits, access points and toilet facilities are clearly labelled.
* Finishes and decorations – the school is decorated to a good standard throughout and wall coverings, decorations or wall hangings and pictures and finishes do not present an obstruction or hazard to any member of the school community.
* Stairs and stairways – the school is built on 1 level so there is no need for stairs or a lift
* Communications, alarm & security systems - The school premises have restricted pedestrian access during school hours and all visitors report to the main office to declare their presence and purpose for their visit. Access to the school is controlled by a security card access system. A remote access system is operated by office staff. Most exterior doors are controlled by security cards or coded locks
* Lighting – the school has undergone an extensive programme of refurbishment to lighting and now benefits from LED lighting in all classrooms, corridors, offices and high traffic areas, and all classrooms benefit from blinds.

**Plan for 2024-2027**

* Doors and door controls – key internal corridor doors have sensor access and remote opening panels.
* Improved access to carpark and drop off zones for parents.
* Upgraded external doors.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The effectiveness of the accessibility policy will be continually assessed through regular discussions at leadership team and governors' meetings. Monitoring the uptake of inclusive opportunities by students will provide valuable insights into the policy's impact. Additionally, the achievements of disabled students will be recognised and celebrated, fostering a culture of inclusivity and achievement within the school community. Seeking feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, outside agencies, support staff, supply staff, and visitors, will ensure that perspectives are diverse and comprehensive, guiding ongoing improvements to accessibility and inclusivity initiatives.

St Laurence in Thanet CE Junior Academy is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment where all students can flourish and achieve their full potential. Through the implementation of this accessibility policy, we aim to uphold the principles of equality and inclusion in our school community.

**Accessibility Audit Summary**

Staff Audit:

The Staff Accessibility Audit assessed the school's arrangements and effectiveness in supporting students with disabilities. Key findings include:

* All respondents confirmed that the school provides necessary training for teachers and teaching assistants to support students with disabilities.
* Teaching in the school is appropriately differentiated to meet individual needs, ensuring good progress for students.
* All staff strive to remove barriers to learning and participation.
* The school encourages all students to participate in music, drama, and physical activities.
* The school provide alternative access to experiences for students with disabilities, for example some forms of physical education.
* The school faces provides information in accessible formats when needed (simple language, symbols, large print, audiotape, Braille).
* Respondents confirmed that the school has ICT facilities to produce written information in different formats.
* Information is made available to staff, students, and parents in a user-friendly way for all people with disabilities.
* All staff recognise and accommodate the additional planning and effort required for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the curriculum.
* All staff are encouraged to allow additional time for students with disabilities to use equipment in practical work.
* The school provides access to appropriate technology for students with disabilities.

Parent Audit:

The school conducted a parent questionnaire to evaluate the accessibility of its premises for individuals with disabilities. The survey received 11 responses, providing insight into various aspects of accessibility. Any comments are listed in **bold.**

Entrances and Exits:

* Opinions were divided on whether the entrances and exits are accessible for wheelchair users and buggies, with some parents unsure about the accessibility. **We acknowledge that manoeuvring larger buggies through the front entrance of the school can be challenging. However, we assure you that wheelchairs can easily access this area. Our staff are readily available and happy to assist any parents who may need help with this.**

Toilet Facilities:

* A majority of parents confirmed the accessibility of toilet facilities.

Parking Spaces:

* Many parents were aware of designated parking spaces near the entrance.

Information in Accessible Formats:

* Most parents confirmed the availability of information in accessible formats upon request.

Provisions for Hearing Impairments:

* Few parents noted provisions like loop systems or sign language interpreters during events. **We appreciate the feedback from parents regarding provisions such as loop systems and sign language interpreters during events. We would like to inform you that all our classrooms are equipped with loop systems, which we regularly use to support children with hearing impairment needs. Additionally, we work closely with the Hearing Specialist Teacher Service to ensure comprehensive support for our children.**

SEN Support:

* Some parents acknowledged support for children with SEND.
* Specifically for Dyslexia, a good number of parents confirmed additional literacy support or assistive technology.

Additional Comments:

* Concerns were raised about the small entrance gate and parking issues near crossings. **We acknowledge the concerns raised regarding the small entrance gate and parking issues near crossings. While we are not responsible for parking outside of the school grounds, we are in the process of developing the school site to improve vehicle access and make entry easier.**
* Some parents expressed satisfaction with the current provisions, while others were unsure about the facilities in school. **We appreciate the feedback from parents regarding the school's provisions. We understand that some parents may be unaware of the available facilities if their child does not currently use them. The school is always happy to discuss and clarify these provisions with parents. Additionally, parents are welcome to attend parents' evenings and open days to see the school site and learn more about our facilities.**