



# **Buckinghamshire Council**

## **Accessibility Strategy**

### **2022-2025**

Author: Nichola Beagle

Directorate: Education, Children's Services

Date: 27 September 2022

*Revised post consultation 2022*

# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Definition .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Vision .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Local Context .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Key Priorities .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Increasing access to the Curriculum .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Improving the Physical Environment .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Settings not maintained by Buckinghamshire Council.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Guidance to settings on accessibility to the Physical Environment .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Improving Access to Information .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Consultation, Implementation and Review .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation, building on previous legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act. The Act introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), sometimes also referred to as the 'general duty', that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics – race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011.

The duty can be reviewed on the Government Website via the link below;

[Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/equality-act-2010)

This strategy has been developed following a public consultation and incorporates feedback received during this process. The strategy sets out Buckinghamshire Council's responsibilities for ensuring education is accessible for disabled pupils, in the schools for which it is responsible (maintained schools), specifically:

- A. "Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools' curriculum by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement";
- B. "Improving the physical environment of the schools 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";
- C. "Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement".

This strategy applies to children and young people with Disabilities:

- Who are currently in maintained schools;
- Who are in the school system but at an earlier key stage e.g., early years settings;
- Who are not yet in the school system but are known to Buckinghamshire Council or other agencies.

This strategy is for schools, governors, parents/carers, young people, professionals, other educational settings, and members of the local community. It should provide guidance and be a reference point from which to inform and develop individual Education Health and Care plans that are co-produced with pupils and their parents/ carers and educational professionals.

This strategy applies to Buckinghamshire Council maintained schools, nurseries, and early years settings only. It does not apply to academies, Private Funded Initiative (PFI) schools or private nursery providers on school sites, however these settings may find the information in the strategy to be information in complying with the requirement to have an accessibility plan.

## **Definition**

The Equality Act is a law which protects individuals from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as disability, is now against the law in almost all cases.

Disability is defined in the Equality Act of 2010 as “where a person has a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities”. This means that nationally, about 9% of children and young people and up to 22% of adults reported they had a disability (figures from The Family Resources Survey for financial year 2020-21; published in March 2022). It is acknowledged that schools and settings do not necessarily have complete information about disabilities as this is not always disclosed by parents/ carers and there is no consistent national way of collecting such information.

The SEND Code of Practice 2014 says, “a child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions”

The Code of Practice states that “Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 – that is ‘...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision, they will also be covered by the SEN definition”.

## **Vision**

Our vision for children and young people with disabilities is the same as that for all children in Buckinghamshire as stated in the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People’s Partnership Vision:

*“To build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so that they realise their potential, whatever their starting point is.”*

*(Buckinghamshire Children & Young People 2019 – 2024 Partnership Plan).*

We want to ensure all children and young people:

- Are safe.
- Live fulfilling lives.
- Are healthy.
- Reach their potential in education and other aspects of their lives.
- Together with their families are resilient and can identify their own solutions.
- Make a positive contribution to their community.

## **Local Context**

Buckinghamshire has a wide range of provision available to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities. Education providers that children and young people with SEND can attend include mainstream schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs); special schools; independent schools; further education. Further information on the range of provision available can be found within our [Local Offer](#).

Specialist teachers promote the successful inclusion and progress of children and young people with SEND to achieve their personal best, working in partnership with schools, parents and other agencies.

## **Key Priorities**

Buckinghamshire Council continues to improve physical access and access to curriculum entitlement for children and young people with disabilities in its schools and other educational settings through:

- Encouraging all to share realistically high expectations for all children and young people.
- Meeting the needs of young people in their local mainstream school or nursery, where possible and appropriate to their needs.
- Encouraging multi-agency working to support local placements.
- Valuing diversity and encouraging all partners to recognise the benefits of having a community of children and young people with a wide range of needs and abilities within each school or setting, who value one another and the different contributions they can make.
- Increasing the confidence, skills, and expertise of mainstream staff through a comprehensive training programme to meet the more diverse needs of children and young people. Bespoke training provides further professional development of teaching

and support staff to develop high quality teaching, targeted and personalised provision. The training is delivered by a range of Buckinghamshire Council Professionals, including Specialist Teachers and Educational Psychologists.

- Embedding Ordinarily Available Provision guidance across schools and settings to support and ensure implementation of the graduated approach.
- Promoting early identification and intervention within schools, supporting them to have more scope to be proactive and creative in identifying solutions for their students. At times this may include providing funding for specialist equipment.
- Providing high quality advice and support to schools where needs are identified.
- Managing the Education, Health and Care needs assessment effectively.
- Supporting the emerging emotional needs of students, particularly in relation to school avoidance /non engagement in education.

## **Increasing access to the Curriculum**

The joint commissioning of education, health and social care provision for children and young people required by the Children and Families Act 2014 has led to the development of more integrated packages of support to assist children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in accessing the curriculum.

### Schools and other educational settings Responsibilities

All schools and settings should provide a broad, balanced, and inclusive curriculum for all pupils, including disabled pupils. Most children and young people will have their needs met through universal mainstream provision for example, in school via SEN Support.

### Buckinghamshire Council Responsibilities

The Integrated SEND Service (iSEND), formed in September 2019, is part of Buckinghamshire Council's local offer for children and young people with SEND. The iSEND service includes Specialist Teachers, Educational Psychologists and Education, Health and Care Coordinators who carry out statutory services for Education Health and Care (EHC) assessment, planning, and monitoring. The service is organised across the county in area hubs, which are in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire.

The iSEND service works in partnership with schools, settings, and post 16 education providers. The purpose of the service is to support and facilitate effective SEND provision, ensuring that children and young people are enabled to reach their full potential.

The iSEND Service supports this vision with the aims of:

- Education settings
  - being supported to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND

- more effectively.
  - settings increasing in confidence so that children and young people with SEND are included and can achieve to their highest potential.
  - building their own expertise through wider workforce development, leading to a highly skilled system of support.
- Parents/ Carers gaining a better understanding of the needs of their child and will have confidence that their child's needs are being met within the school/ setting.

Education, Health and Care Plans provide support over and above that which is ordinarily available within mainstream education settings and aim to support access to learning and development of independence. The approach includes working with the most vulnerable children and young people, based on their individual needs.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 defines the Graduated approach as: *“A model of action and intervention in early education settings, schools, and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs and that, where necessary, increasing specialist expertise should be brought to bear on the difficulties that a child or young person may be experiencing.”*

The Graduated Approach sets out the differing ways by which all children and young peoples with disabilities may have their needs met, not just those children with Education, Health and Care Plans. The Graduated Approach aims to ensure all children and young people receive an appropriate education, one that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential.

In Buckinghamshire work will continue to make the curriculum more accessible to all children and young people, alongside the principles of child-centred care and the Graduated Approach by:

- Working with all educational settings to embed the principles of the Graduated Approach to develop personalised learning and a more child centred focus on planning provision for children and young people with SEND.
- Encouraging schools and settings to develop high quality teaching by providing opportunities for training and further professional development of teaching and support staff.
- Providing training for school SENDCOs to work towards establishing a fully accredited SENDCO workforce.
- Working with health colleagues such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and the complex needs nursing team to support children and young people in their schools.
- Delegating funding to schools to provide support for children and young people with special educational needs.

- Providing information to schools and settings on how they should continue to support children and young people.
- Providing additional short-term high need block funding to support individuals in school and settings in times of need or assessment and provides funding to schools to support children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Arranging suitable full-time education (or as much education as the child's health condition allows) for children of compulsory school age who, because of health needs, would otherwise not receive suitable education.
- Working with the Bucks SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIAS) which offers impartial information, advice, and support to families of children and young people who have SEND.
- Working with Family and Carers Together (FACT Bucks) to engage with parents and carers of pupils with SEND to inform and develop good practice within settings.

## **Improving the Physical Environment**

Improving the physical environment of schools includes improving physical access to schools as well. All new school buildings must comply with current building regulations and should be physically accessible to all pupils. Much of the work in this area involves improving access to existing buildings.

### Schools and other educational settings Responsibilities

Improved access to the physical environment can be achieved through reasonable adjustments and schools do need to consider potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally, as it is likely that any school will have a disabled pupil at some point. However, schools and settings are not obliged to anticipate and adjust for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments.

The aim is for all schools and settings to be “broadly accessible.” This means buildings would have a range of features to meet the core special needs associated with physical difficulties (access ramps, toilets and changing facilities, access to all key curriculum areas) where physically practical. The physical needs of some students (including those with sensory impairments) are very specific and may require specific further adaptations. The Council may be able to assist schools with these, although this will depend on the specific requirements and the feasibility of undertaking such works. It should be noted that not all works will be feasible or achievable for a specific school.

Head Teachers and Governing bodies have responsibility for the physical accessibility of their schools. Disability discrimination legislation requires schools to plan to improve access for those with disabilities through their ‘accessibility plans’. Individual schools are required to



use devolved budgets, including devolved capital, to ensure that these responsibilities are met, as far is reasonable possible. Any adaptation works to school premises should be designed to comply with [Building Regulations](#).

### Buckinghamshire Council Responsibilities

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to developing the range of provision available across the county and recognises that investment in buildings supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with disabilities.

The Council holds a limited budget for capital projects to improve accessibility for individual or groups of students with SEND where it is feasible and practical to do so, to enable them to attend a local mainstream school / school of parental choice.

Many specific projects related to pupils are relatively modest in cost (e.g., classroom blinds for a pupil with visual impairment, a classroom sound field system for a pupil with hearing impairment, a wall mounted adjustable changing bed for a pupil with medical needs). Requests for such specific adaptations to school buildings will be made by health professionals/ specialist teachers and will be set out within the Site Access Report and sent to the Integrated SEND (iSEND) Service. Requests for specialist equipment for individual students with physical/ medical difficulties are made to the iSEND Service via health professionals or specialist teachers and, where approved for education purposes, purchases are fully funded by the council.

Should a pupil require an electric wheelchair solely for school access a referral to the wheelchair service will be made. The service will then assess and determine suitability. Wheelchairs are a health provision even where they are used in an educational setting.

### **Schools not maintained by Buckinghamshire Council**

In the case of schools which it does not maintain (e.g., academies, freeschools, independent schools etc.) Buckinghamshire Council's legal obligations to make changes to the physical environment are very limited. The primary obligation for ensuring compliance will fall on the school itself. However, if requested the Council may consider providing advice, support and/or assistance on a case-by-case basis.

### **Guidance to schools on accessibility to the Physical Environment**

- [Building Regulations Legislation](#)
- Schools can seek further guidance if required from the Buckinghamshire Council Schools Commissioning Team

## Improving Access to Information

### Schools and educational settings Responsibilities

Schools and settings have a duty to provide information in accessible forms to students who may have difficulty reading information in standard written form. The Council supports this by making advice available from the specialist teachers for visual impairment, hearing impairments and physical difficulties. Access to specialist ICT communication equipment is also available for individual students with specific needs.

The communication duty covers the delivery of school information normally provided to pupils in writing. This includes any information given to pupils by the school, such as letters, handouts and worksheets, textbooks, timetables, handbooks, test and examination papers, notices and notice boards, posters around the school, information about school events, and reports on progress.

Schools should be aware that the 'written form' does not simply mean printed text and might also include curriculum materials including handouts and worksheets that may include illustrations, diagrams and maps, materials presented on whiteboards, flipcharts and ICT systems, wall displays and timetables.

### Buckinghamshire Council Responsibilities

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. The Council has developed its own [SEND Local offer](#), providing information on the types of support available.

The [directory](#) is useful for finding local organisations, services and activities that support children and young people with SEND. For those families who are not able to access the internet, the Local Offer is made available in other ways, including:

- using a public computer in your local library
- going to one of our [family centres](#) who can assist with accessing information or who can contact the Family Information Service on your behalf
- asking professionals, you work with for help, such as school staff or social workers who can assist with accessing information or contact the Family Information Service on your behalf.
- by telephoning BFIS on [01296 383 293](tel:01296383293)
- by emailing BFIS at [familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
- [Read about how we have made our website accessible](#)

The Buckinghamshire [SEND Information, Advice and Support Service](#) (SENDIAS) offers impartial information, advice, and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities.

## **Consultation, Implementation and Review**

This Accessibility Strategy covers the period 2022-2025 and sets out how the council plans to increase access to school education for pupils with SEND, in the schools for which it is responsible.

The strategy covers the duties in The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty which brought together the duties upon schools as laid out in the previous Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 and 2005) and the SEN and Disability Act (2001). The legislation requires LAs and schools to take account of both existing pupils and prospective pupils.

The strategy will be reviewed and revised towards the end of the period 2022-25 following a consultation process in 2025.

## **Additional Resources**

[The SEND and inclusion Strategy | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

[Education Sufficiency Strategy | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

[Send Improvement plan 2021-2023 | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

[Children & Young People partnership plan | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

[Specialist teachers | Schools Web](#)

[Education options and admissions for children with SEND | Family Information Service](#)

[Bucks ordinarily available provision and equipment combined support | Schools Web](#)

[Tiered Support | Schools Web](#)

[Plan for Children and Young Peoples Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing](#)

## Glossary

**Education Settings** Refers to education providers including Schools, Nurseries, Early Years Providers, Referral Units (PRUs) and Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs); special schools; independent schools and further education (unregistered education providers can also use this strategy to inform their local procedures)

**SEND** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

**PSED** Public Sector Equality Duty

**PFI** Private Funded Initiative

**EHCP** Education Health and Care Plan

**PRU** Pupil Referral Unit

**ARPs** Additionally Resourced Provisions

**SENDCOs** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinators

**SENDIAS** Send Information, Advice and Support Service

**FACT Bucks** Families and Carers Together

**The Equality Act 2010** is a statute which protects individuals from discrimination. It also places a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as disability, is now against the law in almost all cases