

**PLANNING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO
EDUCATION FOR PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES
STRATEGY 2005 - 2008**

Access to the Curriculum

Access to the Physical Environment of Schools

**Improving Communication and the Delivery of
School Information**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 requires all education authorities to prepare and implement plans to ensure pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities including those from traveller and minority ethnic communities should as far as possible:

- Access all aspects of the school curriculum
- Access the physical environment of schools and transport
- Access communication in an appropriate format

The plan is known as the "Accessibility Strategy"

1.2 The definition of disability is the same as in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995:
"A person is disabled if he or she has a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities"

1.3 The 2005 – 2008 strategy builds on the work undertaken as part of the 2003 – 2005 strategy and takes account:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000
- Race Relation Amendment Act 2000
- Guidance on Presumption of Mainstream Education Scottish Executive (2002)
- Additional Support for Learning Act 2004
- Count me In – promoting inclusive practice in schools
- Learning with care – education for looked after children away from home
- Hungry for Success – improving school meals on Scotland's schools
- Report on the first round of accessibility strategies 2003
- Aberdeenshire Council Integrated Children's Services Plan

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but gives an indication of the range of legislation and guidance that has been taken into account.

1.4 This strategy and other strategies will now be prepared every three years to link in with timescales for other developments e.g. National Priorities.

2. PREPARING THE STRATEGY

2.1 Four groups have been established to prepare and oversee the implementation of the strategy. These are:

- A steering group to take an overview of the strategy
- A curriculum access group
- A physical access group
- A communication group

2.2 Membership of each of the groups is listed at the end of this document.

3. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Education Service will lead on the implementation of the strategy and will provide advice to Community School Networks, and in particular to schools, on including appropriate aspects of the strategy in development plans.
- 3.2 Other aspects of the strategy will be implemented through authority policies and procedures.

4. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Monitoring of the implementation of the strategy will be through
 - Quarterly meetings of the groups described in section 2.2
 - Annual Standards and Quality Reports
 - Annual reports to the Council's Education & Recreation Committee

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Education staff, parents, pupils and other appropriate agencies and voluntary organisation will be consulted and plans improved to reflect their views.

REPORT ON 2003 – 2005 STRATEGY

The 2003 – 05 strategy has achieved the following:

1. Access to the Physical Environment

- All primary, secondary and special schools have been audited for disability access.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: a strategy will be put in place for improving disability access to schools.
- All projects for new school builds have been reviewed to ensure access for pupils with disabilities.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: none
- Planned refurbishments of schools have taken into account access for pupils with disabilities.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: plans for refurbishments will continue to take into account disability access, and advice provided as appropriate.
- Transport policy has been reviewed and training has been put in place for escorts accompanying pupils with disabilities. Advice is being prepared on planning school trips.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: training will continue to be provided for escorts and other staff accompanying pupils on school trips. Advice on school trips will be given to staff.

In addition:

- Draft advice has been prepared for school staff on improved physical access for pupils with mobility difficulties, hearing impairment, visual impairment and pupils with autism.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: school staff will be provided with this advice.

2. Access to the Curriculum

- A sample of primary and secondary schools and all special schools have been audited to identify strengths and barriers to curricular access and to identify examples of good practice. Recommendations for improvement have also been identified.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: consultation will take place on the audits and schools and the authority will put in place plans to address the recommendations.
- School staff are more aware of the inclusion agenda through legislation, training and the authority “Guidelines and Information to Support Inclusion”.
Implications for the 2005 – 08 strategy: advice will be provided to school staff on the inclusion of pupils with specific disabilities.
- A range of training opportunities are available for all school staff to support pupils with particular needs. Such opportunities are listed in the authority’s CPD (Continuing Professional Development) catalogue.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: a range of training opportunities will continue to be promoted and offered.

- Consultation has taken place with a sample of stakeholders, in particular, pupils and parents on curricular accessibility.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: this will be included as part of the recommendations arising from the curriculum audit exercise.
- Aberdeenshire Curriculum Guidelines 3 – 18 have taken account of issues relating to inclusion and accessibility.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: advice will continue to be provided for curricular access.

In addition:

- Draft advice has been prepared for school staff on improved curricular access for pupils with visual and/or hearing impairment, autism, specific learning difficulties and ADHD.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: school staff will be provided with this advice.

3. Improved Communication

- Draft advice for schools has been prepared on accessing interpreting and translating service, on accessing information in different formats e.g. enlarged print, Braille.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: this advice will be issued to school staff.

In addition:

- School admission procedures have been revised to take account of requirements for information in different languages and different formats, access for parents to school buildings and dietary requirements of pupils with disabilities.
Implications for 2005 – 08 strategy: the school admissions procedures will be reviewed to provide advice to staff when enrolling pupils with specific disabilities.

**IMPROVING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR PUPILS WITH
DISABILITIES STRATEGY 2005 – 2008**

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The 2005 – 08 strategy will build on improvements as a result of the 2003 – 05 strategy and will take forward the following:

1. Implement the disability access audit recommendations taking account of new school builds, planned major refurbishments, and asset management audits.
2. Continue to provide training for escorts and other staff accompanying pupils on school trips.
3. Provide advice to school staff on planning trips which will take account of pupils with disabilities.
4. Provide guidance to school staff on improving physical access to schools for pupils with disabilities.
5. Establish database of mobility equipment (e.g. specialist chairs, standers) in schools. This should include equipment in use and spare equipment.
6. Establish and maintain a 'database' of pupils with mobility needs.
7. Continue to provide training in the lifting and handling of pupils.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM

The 2005 – 08 strategy will build on improvements as a result of the 2003 – 05 strategy and will take forward the following:

1. Develop and implement a strategy for addressing the recommendations arising out of the curriculum audit.
2. Issue advice to schools on curriculum accessibility for pupils with visual and/or hearing impairment, autism, specific learning difficulties and autism.
3. Continue to offer CPD opportunities for school staff working with pupils with disabilities.
4. Develop advice on special assessment arrangement for SQA examinations to ensure consistency across Aberdeenshire.
5. Catalogue the range of Access course materials available to secondary schools.
6. Continue to promote inclusive practice through the delivery of equalities training.
7. Develop and implement a strategy for the deployment of SFL teachers and support staff.
8. Ensure authority ICT strategies and plans reflect the needs of pupils with disabilities.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE COMMUNICATION

The 2005 – 08 strategy will build on improvements as a result of the 2003 – 05 strategy and will take forward the following:

1. Issue advice to schools on accessing information in different languages and different formats.
2. Ensure information on accessibility issues is available on the Aberdeenshire internet and intranet websites.
3. Review and revise “Notes for Parents” to ensure they provide information on support available for parents and pupils.
4. Prepare advice on ways of seeking views from pupils and their parents.
5. Ensure authority working groups take account of the views of pupils and parents where appropriate.