



# **DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**

**2006 – 2009**

**St. Margaret's C of E High School**  
Aigburth Road, Liverpool L17 6AB

# Disability Equality Scheme

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Part 1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part 2 Statutory Context</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part 3 The Definition of Disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part 4 Physical Estate</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part 5 Meeting the Needs of Staff</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part 6 Meeting the Needs of Students</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part 7 Actively Involving Disabled People</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>
<b>Part 8 Work in Progress</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Part 9 Disability Equality Vision</b>	<b>6 - 7</b>
<b>Part 10 Leadership and Management</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Part 11 Putting the Scheme into Practice and Monitoring and Evaluating Progress</b>	<b>8</b>

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**Appendix A: Action Plan**



# ***Disability Equality Scheme***

## **1. Introduction**

St Margaret's C of E High School has made a positive commitment to valuing diversity. We are committed to making our school a better place to work and learn. This will be achieved will be by promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination for all our employees, all of our pupils and their parents.

St Margaret's C of E High School takes its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act seriously and seeks to prevent discrimination. Similarly the school will do its best to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. Our plans for fulfilling our duties under the Disability Equality Duty are set out within the Disability Equality Scheme.

## **2. Statutory Context**

The Duty to promote Disability Equality set out in the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005 comes into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2006. The General Duty requires that the school shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act (2005)
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment

The duty extends the DDA (1995) requirements and subsequent Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 – (SENDA) – to anticipate and respond to the individual needs of disabled people – and requires the school to embed disability equality into processes and activities and become a pro-active agent of change.

Specifically the duty requires the school to frame and publish its Disability Equality Scheme (DES). This DES will outline how the school intends to meet its obligations under the duty and improve further its interface with disabled stakeholders.

The 3 year action plan contained within this DES sets out particular actions and responsibilities and indicates in more detail how the school will carry disability equality forward.

### 3. The Definition of Disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

The **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)** defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purpose of the Act:

- **Substantial** means neither minor nor trivial.
- **Long term** means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions).
- **Normal day-to-day activities** include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping.
- **A normal day-to-day activity** must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the Act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory.

Some conditions such as hay fever are specifically excluded.

Provisions allow for people with a past disability to be covered by the scope of the Act. There are also additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions.

The **DDA 2005** amends the definition of disability, removing the requirement that a mental illness should be 'clinically well-recognised'.

People with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis will be deemed to be covered by the DDA effectively from the point of diagnosis, rather than from the point when the condition has some adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### 4. Physical Estate

Since 2002 the school has made considerable progress in making its physical estate more accessible to people with a range of disabilities. New build and major refurbishment programmes, including the construction of the administration block and the Cricket and Sports Centre. These developments have also allowed the school to dispose of or demolish buildings with poor or no disabled access.

In addition, the upgrading of existing buildings has included the refurbishment of ground floor corridors, new accessible toilets and access / egress ramps. Other relevant improvements include the improvement of lighting along circulation corridors, the provision of appropriate décor colour contrasts and improved fire signage.

The school will continue to improve the physical estate over the life of this scheme and further material improvements are planned. Maximising accessibility will figure prominently in the schools on-going capital development and maintenance programme. The school aims to increase the percentage of the estate with excellent or good access and reduce the percentage with poor access.

## **5. Meeting the Needs of Staff**

Since 2002 the school has been recognised as an employer who is positive about disability. Applicants for posts who declare a disability and who meet the person specification are guaranteed an interview. Members of staff who have declared a disability are actively supported and managers are encouraged to make adjustments to work environments or practices where appropriate to better enable staff to function effectively.

The school does feel it has further to go in collecting staffing data in respect of disability. In support of this, recruitment and employment procedures will be reviewed to ensure that the applicants and staff are given maximum encouragement and opportunity to disclose disability.

We will also begin to collect and actively scrutinize (using benchmark data where possible) staff disability data in respect of such things as applications and recruitment, career development/promotion, take-up of staff development/training opportunities, duration of employment etc. This data will be used actively to inform self-assessment of HR practices.

## **6. Meeting the Needs of Students**

The school has generally responded positively to the needs of students with disabilities and successive OFSTED inspections have highlighted our support for pupils as a key strength.

Where the school does have prior notice of need it works with pupils, parents, carers and other partners. Care and support plans are agreed and staff are briefed / trained where appropriate.

Our Accessibility Statement and pupil admissions procedure have been revised to better reflect an anticipatory culture and to encourage early disclosure of disability. We believe that we can improve this further.

In addition to named SENCO Officers and teams of learning support staff, teaching staff have a particular remit to ensure that the needs of pupils with disabilities are better anticipated and barriers to progress are removed.

Where an identified need exists, suitable specialist equipment is provided.

Better use does need to be made of pupil data in respect of disability. Applications, interviews, enrolments, retention, achievement, satisfaction levels and onward progression data for pupils with disabilities does need to be collated and actively interrogated to inform self-assessment and subsequent practice.

## **7. Actively Involving Disabled People**

Since December 2005 the school has operated a 'disability forum' comprising disabled staff and pupil and others with a particular interest in disability.

Across its operations the school does endeavour to provide a supportive environment for disabled stakeholders.

We actively seek to engender a culture (and mechanisms) where possible barriers are better understood and reviewed. In support of this we intend to implement a programme of activities, which is informed by disabled stakeholders, designed to raise further an awareness of disability and disability issues amongst both our staff and our pupils. In doing this we will be explaining the Social Model of disability and emphasising the schools commitment to that model.

## **8. Work in Progress**

Despite the progress that has been made, the school does recognise that there is still work to be done to further improve our service to disabled stakeholders. A significant feature of this DES will, therefore, be the reviewing of key policies, and procedures to assess their impact upon people with disabilities. These impact assessments will inform subsequent practice.

This DES will not sit in isolation and it represents a significant element of the schools (wider) equality and diversity initiatives. The school recognises the importance of the DES linking organically with other documents and broader planning. The DES will inform (and be informed by) strategic and operational planning and self-assessment and quality improvement planning and through these processes feed into the broad range of school activities.

## **9. Disability Equality Vision**

The school recognises that the 'medical model' of disability which has been prevalent encourages a disproportionate focus on impairment and perceived diminished capability. The problem, or barrier, is the person's impairment. We believe that this approach, even where well-meaning, can have the effect of disempowering disabled people and perpetuating a cycle of, at best, dependency and, at worst, exclusion.

The school is committed to promoting the social model of disability and shifting the emphasis from what is 'wrong' with a person and what they cannot do. Through training and awareness raising staff will be encouraged to review customs and practice and recognise and dismantle barriers before they have an impact on individuals.

During the life of this first DES the school aims to:

- Develop in practical ways, our commitment to the 'social model' of disability. We embrace, in this model, the right of a disabled person to belong, to be valued, to determine choice and make decisions. The focus across St Margaret's C of E High School will be less upon individual impairment but rather on our own attitudes, systems and practices to ensure that these do not create barriers to participation, whether directly or indirectly;
- Adopt a pro-active approach to mainstreaming disability equality into all relevant services and functions, so that by the end of this first DES disability equality can be better documented and evidenced through our practices;

- Foster a culture of enhanced awareness across the school community to ensure that disability equality is better recognised and is clearly evidenced in how we conduct our business with one another and with stakeholders more widely;
- Set and apply the highest disability equality standards in respect of our delivery of provision and services and in our employment practices;
- Actively involve disabled stakeholders to help and make our services and provision more relevant and accessible as a right to present and future disabled stakeholders;
- Target resources, where necessary, to remove obstacles which might exclude people with disabilities;
- Have more robust data for pupils and staff in respect of disability and be using it actively to support self-assessment and planning;
- Use marketing material, pupil and staff recruitment processes more pro-actively to encourage disclosure of disability;
- Impact assess key policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they support the General Duty and actively promote equality of opportunity in the most effective way;

More details about how the school intends to carry forward these commitments is contained within the attached action plan.

## **10. Leadership and Management**

The whole senior management team has been briefed on the DED and have signalled their commitment to the General Duty and to the vision and actions contained within this DES.

There have been a series of disability equality briefing and training sessions for managers, designed to demonstrate that moving forward requires a whole school approach and a recognition that we all, especially managers, have a role to play.

Key managers have contributed to this DES and have been required to assess the impact of their area of operation on disabled people, look at the General Duty and set out how they will ensure that their area is responding to it and contributing to the school vision. Some of these responses are contained within the action plan.

Governors have also been briefed on DES progress and the secretary to the Board, who also sits on the Disability Forum, provides a direct link. Governors will receive periodic updates on progress in implementing this DES, including a formal annual progress report.

Staff, more generally have been made aware of the DED but a key element of the action plan is to expand the programme of disability awareness training for staff. In particular there will be a focus on explaining the social model of disability and equipping staff to play an active part in promoting disability equality. In addition the school will seek to build further on the guidance available to staff dealing with specific areas such as dyslexia, autism, sensory impairment and mental health.

## **11. Putting the Scheme into Practice and Monitoring and Evaluating Progress**

This DES will be posted on the school website. Hard copies will be available on request and in a variety of formats.

Crucial to the principles and vision developed in this DES is the 3 year action plan. This indicates the practical steps the school will take to ensure that it is responding positively and effectively to the General Duty and is improving further the quality of its service to, and interface with, disabled stakeholders.

The 3 year action plan set out in this first DES is heavily weighted towards actions to be carried out in the first eighteen months. It is anticipated that the experience of information gathering and impact assessment in this first phase will lead to the inclusion of new actions. For years 2 and 3 it is also envisaged that once more extensive baseline data has been collected and analysed this will furnish the action plan with some more quantifiable targets for 2008 and 2009.

The DES will be formally reviewed annually and an annual report, reflecting progress made and suggesting any amendments to the scheme or action plan will be collated.

This report will be circulated to the Disability Forum for discussion and comment. It will be posted on the school website and intranet. Copies, in a variety of formats, will be available on request.

The report will include the headline results of impact assessments carried out during the year, key messages arising out of data analysis and other information and feedback gathered and a statement of the improved outcomes for disabled people that have been achieved. It may also include amendments to the DES or action plan suggested by an evaluation of progress made.

Monitoring and evaluation will not be confined to the annual report. If in year analysis of information gathered or impact assessment outcomes suggest it, the action plan may be amended at any time.

The monitoring and evaluation of the DES will also figure as part of the whole school self assessment process in respect of Equality and Diversity. In carrying out their self-assessments, units will be required to focus specifically on their response to and progress in, disability equality. Subsequent quality improvement plans may therefore link with the DES action plan. In this way the school aims to embed disability equality more firmly in its quality improvement and review and planning practices.

In the first year of this first DES an interim review of the DES and action plan will take place in April 2007.