

Equal Opportunities and Accessibility Policy

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since September 2002, Governing Bodies and Management Committees have had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the DDA:

- Not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- To make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage;
- To plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

This plan sets out the steps to enable access to education for disabled pupils in the three areas required by the planning duties in the DDA:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
- Improving the environment of Balance Alternative Provision to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services;
- Improving the delivery to disabled pupils and parents/carers of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005, all schools have both a general duty to promote disability equality and a specific duty to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES), which sets out the steps it will take to meet the general duty and a related action plan. It is a statutory requirement that schools demonstrate how they have involved disabled stakeholders in drawing up the DES.

It is a requirement that the Academy's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised as necessary. Attached is a set of action plans showing how Balance Alternative Provision will address the priorities identified in the plan.

The Purpose and Direction of Balance's Plan:

Vision and Values

Balance Alternative Provision has high ambitions for all of our pupils, and we expect them to participate and achieve in every aspect of our school life. Through the delivery of a broad, balanced and personalised curriculum, we strive to maximise each student's potential. We tailor our curriculum to meet needs and offer opportunities for all children and young people to be creative, reflective and independent in order to improve their life chances. Interaction with others, participation and teamwork are strongly encouraged and opportunities are delivered through a range of approaches.

Our Aims

- Place the health, safety, welfare and well-being of every member of the provision community at the centre of everything we undertake.
- Challenge, support and encourage everyone to do their best, building self confidence in learners in all aspects of their lives.
- Have high expectations for individuals; both children and staff.
- Encourage collective responsibility around improving aspiration, attainment and positive behaviours for its children, staff and the wider community.
- A caring learning community, based on promoting social responsibility, honesty, equality and consideration for others.
- Have high expectations for individuals; both children and staff.
- Promote and achieve success, both collectively and with individual children and staff.
- Encourage self-help, self-determination and self-improvement.
- Promote inclusion, by collaborative working within the AP Independent school and equally with outside agencies and partners.

Our commitment to equal opportunities is driven by the National Curriculum Inclusion statement. We welcome all children, young people and staff, irrespective of race, colour, creed or impairment. Every member of staff shares in the responsibility to remove barriers to learning for all pupils, including those with a disability.

The DfE Definition of a Disability

The disability discrimination duties are owed to all pupils who are defined by the DDA as being disabled and under the planning duties, schools and local authorities have a general duty to improve the accessibility of schools for disabled pupils.

The DDA defines a disabled person as 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' (see definition below of normal day-to-day activities). Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments and hidden impairments.

In the DDA 'substantial' means 'more than minor or trivial'. 'Long-term' means has lasted or is likely to last more than 12 months.

The definition is broad and includes children with a wide range of impairments, including learning disabilities, dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), diabetes or epilepsy, where the effect of the impairment on the pupil's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is adverse, substantial and long-term. All those with cancer or surviving cancer; HIV or Multiple Sclerosis are now included from the point of diagnosis. A significant number of pupils are therefore included in the definition.

The Proprietor and Head of Provision recognises that equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically, certain groups of people with particular characteristics e.g. race, disability, sex and sexuality, have experienced discrimination.

Progressive Conditions Considered to be a Disability

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions. People with HIV, cancer or Multiple Sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis. People with some visual impairments are automatically deemed to be disabled.

Normal Day to Day Activity

The test of whether impairment affects normal day-to-day activity is whether it affects one or more of the following:

- mobility;
- manual dexterity;
- physical co-ordination;
- continence;
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand;
- perception of risk of physical danger.

Disability and Special Educational Needs

Many children who have SEN will also be defined as having a disability under the DDA. It is likely that many of the pupils who have SEN and a statement or who are at Balance AP will count as disabled. However, not all children who are defined as disabled will have SEN. For example, those with severe asthma, arthritis or diabetes may not have SEN but may have rights under the DDA. Similarly, not all children with SEN will be defined as having a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act. In particular, some children whose emotional and behavioural difficulties have their origins in social or domestic circumstances may fall outside the definition.

Examples:

SEN	SEN and Disabled	Disabled
Mild dyslexia	Motor impairment (long term)	Asthma
EBD – social factors		Diabetes
Mild dyspraxia	Hearing impairment/visual impairment	Cancer

Minor speech impairment	Incontinence	Disfigurement
Mild learning difficulties	Epilepsy	Sickle Cell anaemia
Etc.	Non-verbal	Gross obesity
	ADHD	Missing limbs
	Autism	Etc.
	EBD (factors other than social e.g. mental health)	
	Etc.	

Information from Pupil Data and Audit

Balance Alternative Provision will develop a database of SEN and other additional need which is updated on a regular basis. This will enable all staff to plan activities and intervention accordingly. Additional provision is linked to tracking performance and data. All pupils' progress is tracked including those who come under the heading definition of 'disabled'.

Tracking will plot progress and identify specific Intervention Programmes as required, including additional adult support, to sustain access to the curriculum and experience achievement.

Advanced information about children and young people, who are referred to Balance Alternative Provision under the definition of 'disabled', is looked at in depth by the Head of Provision. Additional capacity to support social and emotional intervention will be provided by the therapeutic team comprising of CAMHs, EP and Personal Learning Advocate professionals.

Ensuring access to the curriculum involves seeking specific resources for our disabled pupils, e.g. enlarged print, limiting use of ICT screens for pupils with sensory issues, staff training for children with epilepsy, diabetes, etc.

Patterns of attendance are monitored by the Head of Provision in the first instance. Persistent absences are closely monitored and, if necessary, investigated by sharing with the home school our concerns to ascertain whether there are safeguarding issues.

Robust systems are in place to ensure the smooth transition of pupils to and from the Provision. Liaison and the sharing of information regarding disabled pupils with a statement of SEN/EHCP will begin with our Head of Provision meeting with mainstream SENCo's

following a formal referral. Balance staff will liaise with parents/carers and other agencies to ensure that all relevant information is passed on and any appropriate adjustments and preparations can be made for the pupil. Pupils, parents/carers are always invited to look around before the offer of a place is accepted.

Balance Alternative Provision aims to provide an environment in which all are valued and respected as individuals regardless of ethnic origin, gender, ability or disability. Balance provides a fully differentiated learning environment for pupils across Key Stage 3 and 4 and caters primarily for pupils who display social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMHD) as well as those with a wide range of short and long-term medical disabilities. Balance Alternative Provision also educates youngsters who present with specific behaviours associated with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome. The characteristic cohort of pupils will be monitored and evaluated annually to inform policy and practice. Through mixing with a wide range of abilities and needs, children and young people will begin to accept and see beyond individual differences and learn to value the opinions and differences of others.

All staff will demonstrate inclusive policy and practice in order to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. When necessary, additional support is allocated and a dedicated Social Worker strengthens relationships with parents and carers. We will develop excellent working relationships and well-established links with a large number of experts and professionals such as CAMHS, Ed Psych and SENART. Overall, relationships with pupils aspire to be excellent and 'pupil voice' will be valued and widely promoted.

Plans to regularly review Schemes of Work (SOW) are established to ensure the curriculum for all is accessible. Consideration is given to breadth and balance, effective differentiation, as well as motivational activities. Pupil progress and attainment is continually assessed against academic and behaviour targets. The data is analysed to compare against previous performance and against the 'norms and aids with the process of target setting and supporting pupils' return to their mainstream setting. Staff will meet daily to discuss individual pupil academic and behavioural progress and notes will inform formal reports to parents/carers, and the home schools, and subsequently inform planning for teaching and learning and completion of multi-agency reviews. This means that strategies for ensuring the most appropriate support is constantly under review resulting in the application of best practice.

Where necessary, special access arrangements will be applied for pupils sitting exams. Staff will have a deep knowledge of individual pupils' needs, and measures to ensure modifications and approved support will be applied following approval via the awarding body.

A wide range of informative and constructive guidance/advice will be available to parents/carers and pupils either directly from Balance or via the website.

Inclusive Practice

Many pupils who present with hidden disabilities such as depression, dyspraxia, ADHD are prescribed medication which can affect their ability to focus and organise themselves. In such cases, and according to individual need, the Behaviour Policy is differentiated to take account of the effects of the disability or prescribed medication. For example, individual arrangements may be applied if a pupil struggles to arrive on time.

The provision is fully committed to providing a fully accessible environment which values and includes all pupil, staff, parents/carer and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are further committed to challenging attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.

The views and aspirations of pupils, parents/carers will be formally gathered through the review process and also via formal questionnaires. These processes seek to establish what is going well and also highlight any concerns or barriers to progress from the pupil's point of view. Parents/carers have the opportunity to express their views either in writing or simply verbally at the review meeting and are encouraged to make contact with Balance Alternative Provision whenever they have any concerns. All staff will support the communication process in order to ensure that relationships between home and school are as positive as possible.

Staff Training

This Accessibility Policy and Plan is approved by the Proprietor and Head of Provision, who take overall responsibility for its implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Provision to provide information and training for staff on the provisions of SEN and Disability Act (2001). It is acknowledged that there will be need for ongoing awareness training for all staff and members of the core team in the matter of disability discrimination and the potential need to inform attitudes on this matter.

Attached is an action plan, relating to these three key aspects of accessibility. These plans will be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis. It is a requirement that Balance's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented, reviewed, and revised as necessary.