

School Document/Policy



Title: DDA Accessibility Strategy


This guidance is to be read in conjunction with related
National Autistic Society Policies

Declaration

The Sybil Elgar School does not promote partisan political views.

The school will have regard for The Human Rights Act, 1998, The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, as amended by The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001, including new duties 2002, and The Principles of the New Code of Practice, 2001, with special focus on Student Empowerment, Parents in Partnership and Consultation and Joint Working initiatives.

In addition the school has regard for the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Document lead (s)	Deputy Principal & Senior Administrator
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Signed Chloe Phillips Principal	

Introduction

The Sybil Elgar School has two sites in West London which offer primary and secondary school provision for ages 4.0 to 16 and provision for ages 16 to 22.

In addition the NAS provide a separate 6 bed children's Home (Sybil Elgar House) with facility for 8 boarders and additional short breaks; all of whom currently attend Sybil Elgar School.

Criteria for admission includes the need for a formal diagnosis of Autism. This is required to be the primary barrier to learning, while recognising that many students will have additional educational and medical needs that will also need to be addressed.

The Sybil Elgar School is a resource, for students significantly affected by autism, who require a high degree of structure and support, tailored to meet their individual needs. The school is currently registered to take 120 students from 4-19+ years of age. The school meets the needs of students across the wide spectrum of this developmental disorder through an individualised approach, enabling them to achieve their full potential.

There are an increasingly significant number of students who are referred to the school who have extremely complex behaviour that challenges services. The NAS is developing a strategic plan to support schools to maintain and educate this population. The vulnerability of this particular group has implications for access to all aspects of school life, e.g.

- Resources – enhanced staffing, quiet individual teaching rooms, durable and high quality equipment.
- Communication – differentiated approaches to individualise the admissions procedure, informed assessment recognising specific needs to inform teaching and learning.
- Access for people with disabilities.
- Disabled access and the physical environment – the current population are generally mobile. However, the needs of parents, staff and visitors to school must also be considered.

The students also benefit from a SPELL friendly environment, which may need to be adapted according to individual needs. The school recognises that refurbishment should incorporate the all changing needs of the students. We have recently completed an NAS audit tool to help us to determine if our buildings comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.2005 and Equalities Act 2010. The form asks a series of questions which require a yes/no answer. These forms will inform a corporate assessment carried out by the QUENSH Manager of the NAS.

Areas of development are highlighted in the School Development Plan and incorporated in the school budget. However some school improvements are heavily reliant on the support of others for example The National Autistic Society (NAS) Finance, Fundraising and successful grant applications. It is therefore difficult to estimate specific time frames for some areas of development. The Sybil

Elgar School Safety Action Group (SAG), meet once a term and the DDA Access plan is a regular agenda item.

At Sybil Elgar School, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for our students who all have a disability, for staff and all those who work on behalf of the school or receive services from the school. Inclusion is a principle that we would wish to apply to all aspects of our life as a school. As part of this, we aim to develop further a culture of inclusion and diversity and to continue to seek ways of ensuring that all can participate fully in school life. The achievement of our students with disabilities will be monitored and we will use this data to raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will make reasonable adjustments to make sure that the school environment is as accessible as possible. We believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here. The social, physical and educational environment of our school should foster the full participation of all.

Our approach is not just about making individual adjustments for people with disabilities; we are much more concerned with taking an organisation-wide approach to tackling disability-related discrimination. We believe that providing equal opportunities is not about treating everyone equally; this might well result in a lack of opportunity for people with disabilities. We must be prepared to take extra reasonable steps to promote equality of opportunity, even if this means that we are treating a disabled person more favourably than someone else. In order to help promote positive attitudes towards the disabled, we shall continue to find appropriate opportunities to develop in students a real understanding of the contribution that the disabled make to our society and culture. This will be done through our PSCE and Social Communication curriculum in a way that is meaningful for each student.

We accept that people with impairments are disabled by physical and social barriers. The 'problem' of disability results from social structures and attitudes, rather than from a person's impairment or medical condition. Nationally, this approach has influenced a rights-based view of equality for disabled people and represents the key to understanding and implementing the Disability Equality Duty, the aim of which is to understand and dismantle the barriers which exclude and limit the life chances of disabled people.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 (Commencement No. 4) Order 2010 places a general duty on us to have due regard for the following:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- Eliminating discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA & EA;
- Eliminating harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- Encouraging participation in public life by disabled people;
- Taking steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

This is also known as the Disability Equality Duty (DED) and applies to all disabled students, staff and those using services provided by the school.

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A Specific Duty is also placed upon us to produce a Disability Equality Scheme with the involvement of people with disabilities, and an action plan to explain how we will carry out the General Duty. We then have to consider the impact that the implementation of this plan has in order to review and revise our actions.

Definition of disability

In reviewing our position with regard to disability equality, we shall use the definition of a disabled person set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (Commencement No. 4) Order 2010 (DDA). This defines a disabled person as someone who has 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

The DDA 2005 has also extended the definition of disability as follows:

- People with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer (although not all cancers) are deemed disabled before they experience the long-term and substantial adverse effect on their activities.
- Section 18 has been amended so that individuals with a mental illness no longer have to demonstrate that it is "clinically well-recognised", although the person must still demonstrate a long-term and substantial adverse affect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Involvement in the Development of the Disability Equality Scheme

In identifying our strengths and weakness and in assessing the priorities for development and improvement, our school will increasingly seek to involve our key partners. This will be through, the Student Council, parent coffee mornings/lunches and parent evenings and by getting feedback from our student population, parents and LEA representatives at the young persons' Annual Review or EHCP review. This aspect of participation will be central to the way in which we undertake our responsibilities in relation to the Disability Equality Duty.

Access to the curriculum

Being a Special school, the curriculum currently in-place at Sybil Elgar School has been developed with its own students educational needs in mind. It accepts the principle that each student has a right to a broad, balanced and appropriate curriculum which is designed specifically to meet his/her needs

The National Curriculum has been adapted and is delivered to meet individual needs. At present no students will be working at the level of their peer group who do not have learning difficulties and therefore the National Curriculum Programmes of Study have all been adapted to reflect a much broader age range. This has led to the need to ensure that age appropriate materials and resources are developed and used to promote meaningful learning and with a strong focus on the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

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Access to written information

To support a wide diverse range of different curriculum needs, staff adapt written materials and present them in a variety of ways. The school uses Makaton signing for those with little or no speech, symbols and object cues for those who do not read and are visual learners, large print materials. ICT is used to support learning and both 'high tech' and 'low tech' communication aids are used.

Materials in languages other than English are available for those students who need them.

Access to the Physical Environment

Access to the physical environment is generally good. Access to facilities and resources is important but must be viewed in light of the range of learning difficulties presented by the students. For example, a significant number of students would put themselves 'at risk' if they were not confined to specific areas of the school. All exits have therefore to be controlled either by physical or mechanical means.

In conclusion

Accessibility will be an aspect of all improvement planning and will be explicit in the School Development plan (SDP), curriculum Development, Performance Management and Staff professional Development

*For the purposes of this policy and for fluency the term 'student' is used to describe all learners from the Early Years through to the 16-22 Provision