



Disability Policy and Accessibility Plan

This policy also applies to the Early Years' Foundation Stage and Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014

General Statement of the School's Statutory Duties

St Margaret's is committed to promoting equality for all. This statement represents the response of the Board of Governors to its duties to promote equality for disabled people.

This policy incorporates the duties of schools under the Education Act 1996, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the DDA 1995 Part IV (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001) (SENDDA) and takes full notice of the Code of Practice for Schools published by the Disability Rights Commission (2002). It also has regard to the 2015 SEND Code of Practice for Schools, though it does not incorporate all the code's SEN recommendations.

Definitions

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Children with SEN are defined as 'those having a learning difficulty (the definition of which includes having a disability) which calls for special educational provision.'

A 'learning difficulty' is defined as arising if a child:

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children in the same age group;
- Has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age group in schools within the area of the Local Authority;
- Is under the age of 5 years and is, or would be, if special educational provision was not made, likely to fall within the above categories, when above that age.

Arrangements to improve access to the curriculum for those with SEN are addressed in the school's separate SEN Policy.

For children over 2 there are elements of objectivity and subjectivity in the definition. The fact of a disability or learning difficulty may be objective, but whether or not the educational facilities within the area are available to meet her needs is subjective. It follows that it is possible to be disabled under the DDA and not have SEN, and vice versa. It is also possible to be both disabled under the DDA and have SEN.

There is often confusion about when a disability is the same as a special educational need and when it isn't. A child with cystic fibrosis (a lifelong and life-shortening disease which can affect digestion, heart and lungs), diabetes or epilepsy would be considered disabled but may have no problems in learning and so require no additional or different help in order to make adequate progress - they would not have SEN but do have needs as a disabled child. Conversely, a child with a learning difficulty or a speech and language delay will require additional or different interventions in class to help them make adequate progress, but these kinds of needs are unlikely to have a substantial and long-term adverse affect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, so such a child would have SEN but not a disability.



Disability

The definition is not the same as the definition of special educational needs. The DDA defines disability as:

- 'A person with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.
- 'Mental impairment' includes learning difficulties and mental illnesses (so long as any illness is clinically well recognised).
- 'Long-Term' means at least one year.
- 'Day-to-day activities' are described as: 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; and perception of the risk of physical danger.

Language

A child is not deemed to have a learning difficulty simply because English is not his/her first language.

Our Policy – Overview

St Margaret's recognises that a person, whether staff, pupil, or visitor, has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which substantially, and in the long term adversely, affects that person's normal day to day activities. However, having a disability does not imply that a pupil has for that reason alone "special educational needs" under the terms of the Education Act 1996 and the Code of Practice. Details of the School's arrangements for pupils with Special Educational Needs are dealt with under a separate Policy. Each pupil with a disability will be given separate consideration and treatment. It is the school's policy not to treat a disabled person less favourably for a reason related to his/her disability than a person who does not have a disability, without justification.

At present, and for the foreseeable future, our physical facilities for the disabled are extremely limited, owing to the constraints of the size, age and layout of our premises. We will nonetheless do all that is reasonable to ensure that the School's culture, policies and procedures are made accessible to children who have disabilities and to comply with our legal and moral responsibilities under the relevant legislation in order to accommodate the needs of applicants, pupils and members of staff who have disabilities for which, after reasonable adjustments, we can cater adequately.

In defining what is reasonable the school will take into account:

- The cost and feasibility of making specific alterations to the school premises given that the school is nearly 100% dependent on fee income;
- Staffing requirements;
- Implications on financial resources and the likelihood of any external funding being available to offset this;
- Health and Safety considerations;
- The interests of other pupils and staff.

Admissions

Admission to the school depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the required academic entrance criteria. The school must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by her peers. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at the school.



As incorporated within its Equal Opportunities Policy, the school applies these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of her disability.

The school asks parents to include in their admissions documentation a note as to the health of the prospective pupil at the time of application and any reasonable adjustments which may be required for the purposes of the entry process or education at the school. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the school may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards as appropriate. Subject to this, the school will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

Existing Pupils

The School also recognises that medical and psychological conditions can develop in existing pupils which may require adjustments to be made to the way in which the curriculum is delivered. Parents must, as soon as possible, disclose to the School in confidence any known medical condition, health problem or allergy affecting a pupil. Where appropriate the Principal will set up a consultation process so that interim measures can be put in place to support the pupil and her longer term requirements determined. The School will, to the best of its ability, make such adjustments as are reasonably practicable to allow a pupil to continue at the school.

Staff

The requirements of job applicants and existing members of staff who have, or have had, a disability will be reviewed regularly to ensure that whatever reasonable adjustments are possible are made to allow them to enter into, or remain in, School employment. Promotion opportunities, benefits and facilities of employment will not be unreasonably limited and every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that disabled staff can participate fully.

Premises

The premises of St Margaret's School consist of a semi-detached house, dating from the beginning of the 20th century, internally adapted for educational use, augmented by two single-storey classrooms sited in a small playground area (formerly the garden of the house). It is the only non-residential building in the street, which forms part of a conservation area. The building is currently arranged thus:

Lower Ground Floor

- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 Classrooms
- ICT Suite
- Cloakrooms

Access from this floor to the Ground Floor is by staircase and to the playground via steps up from the Reception classroom.

Ground Floor

- Entrance Hall
- Hall (Lunch, Music and some Drama lessons)
- Bursar's Office
- School and Principal's Offices
- Classroom
- Visitors' cloakroom



The Ground Floor is accessed from the street via the main front door, up two steps or via a portable ramp. Access to the playground is via steps (part of the fire escape) at the rear. One staircase leads down to the Lower Ground Floor and another leads up to the First Floor.

First Floor

- Classrooms
- Library / Office
- Staff Room
- Staff cloakroom

Access from this floor is via staircases down to the Ground Floor and up to the Second Floor.

Second Floor

- Art Room
- Classrooms

Access to and from this floor is via a staircase.

Third Floor

- Music practice rooms*
- Roof Terrace

Access to and from this floor is via a staircase.

**Where a pupil with mobility issues wishes to take a private music lesson requiring access to the third floor, every effort will be made to relocate that lesson in more accessible location.*

Off-site

St Luke's School for Gym.

Playground

Two/three further rooms, the Science Laboratory and the Royal Tollgate Hall/Split or Joint Classrooms, are housed in buildings in the playground. There is one step up from the playground to the doors of both. The playground is accessed from the street via a gate (level access) and from the main school building via steps down from the Ground Floor and up from the Lower Ground Floor.

Other External Facilities

Our Physical Education curriculum and sporting co-curricular activities are delivered almost exclusively off-site, using facilities hired from other schools, local authorities and other organisations. Girls travel to these either on foot or in the (leased) school minibus.

Reception and Year 1 pupils are normally taught in their own classrooms, but must use the stairs to access the Hall for morning assembly and lunch. Other Junior School pupils are accommodated on higher floors and must use the stairs more frequently in the course of the day. In the Senior School, we have fixed classrooms for each subject, based on the valid ground of having all the facilities for one subject in one place. This requires pupils to go from classroom to classroom, often up steps or stairs. There is no scope for installing a lift. It is not hard to conclude that any pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these problems, if not prohibited altogether from access to some or all of the educational and other facilities the school offers. The Governors cannot envisage any practical means by which the current school can be expanded, extended or reconfigured to remedy this, given the school's limited financial resources and, just as crucially, the very strict planning constraints pertaining to its site.



Current and Future Plans

Our premises planning is, for the reasons given above, restricted to structural maintenance, alteration of use of existing rooms, and improvements to the equipment and technical facilities provided for educational and administrative purposes.

Adaptations and additions to the School's equipment, facilities and organisation to improve the physical environment, access to the curriculum and the way information is delivered are and will continue to be considered, resourced and implemented on the basis of an assessment of the needs of individual prospective or existing pupils and staff.

Our three-year Accessibility Plan, which will be reviewed at least annually, is set out below:
Disability Accessibility Plan – see attached '3 Year SENDA' plan.

Monitoring and Review

Qualitative and quantitative information on the discharge of our legal and moral responsibilities towards prospective and current staff and pupils with disabilities will be collected, analysed and reported to the Board of Governors, at appropriate intervals. This policy will be monitored by the Board of Governors through Principal reports, and will be reviewed biennially.

Related Policies

Equal Opportunities Policy
Admissions Policy
Special Educational Needs Policy