

PHILPOTS MANOR SCHOOL DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION POLICY AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

POLICY NO. 90

3-YEAR PERIOD COVERED BY THE PLAN: 2009 - 2011

Introduction

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. Since September 2002, the Governing Body has 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.

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'disability' has the same meaning as that given in the DDA and SENDA : ' A person suffers a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal daily activities.'

This plan sets out the proposals of the School to increase 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 the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services;
- Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

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

1. PHILPOTS MANOR SCHOOL

Philpots Manor School is an Independent Residential Special School for children and young people with a range of disabilities. All children and young people are disabled by the definition given in the SEN and Disability Act 2001. It is the purpose of the School to meet the social, emotional, educational, behavioural, physical and spiritual needs of each child or young person.

Each student admitted to the School may expect to be assisted in developing in these areas to the best of their ability, whatever their needs or disabilities. The School is committed to making reasonable adjustments to the physical environment, curriculum and activities to allow this to happen.

Staff and visitors can also expect to be treated with respect for their individual abilities or disabilities and to have reasonable adjustments made for their needs.

The Equal Opportunities Policy, Number 57, Appendix A, details Philpots Manor School's commitment to meeting the needs of as many people as reasonably possible.

2. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

Since all students at Philpots are disabled the reasonable adjustments needed for each student are assessed on Admission, at least twice-yearly via an Individual Education Plan and yearly via an Individual Risk Assessment Plan, Health Plan, Placement Plan and Annual Education Review.

Teachers and Houseparents also review access to the curriculum content on a daily basis through lesson planning and differentiation of education and care.

3. PHYSICAL BARRIERS

The physical environment of the School has been assessed by a thorough DDA Access Audit undertaken by THSE Ltd in 2007. This has been supplemented by a Site Security Audit, also in 2007 and several further audits of the site in 2008 that covered electrical safety and an extensive Health and Safety audit of the whole school. This latter, undertaken by Health and Safety Consultants Data Sound, employed by the School, covers all the physical aspects, processes and paperwork, as well as the management of the safety of students, staff and visitors at Philpots. These consultants, along with the School's architect and quantity surveyor, will also monitor the ongoing physical developments, plans and processes to ensure they comply with DDA physical accessibility requirements.

The physical environment at Philpots would be challenging for students with mobility problems. This is the main area that needs addressing and will be the focus of work in the next three years.

4. ADMISSIONS

Admissions and Reception of Children Policy, Appendix B, describes the procedure whereby the needs of children and young people who have applied to join the School are assessed. The policy and procedure is designed to ensure that each application is carefully considered by a group including the appropriate Class Teacher and Houseparent so that the needs of the applicant and also the proposed peer group are assessed.

A study into the last ten years identified the syndromes posing more than usual difficulties for our methods of education and care. Children and young people with Attachment Disorders or who live in Children's Homes had a higher than usual number of exclusions over the ten years. However, some girls with Attachment Disorders have done well and have been educated at Philpots for many years, after we put in place an array of methods to help with these difficulties. We have done very well with students with Aspergers Syndrome, Tourettes, Autistic Spectrum Disorders and those suffering from abuse and Moderate Learning Difficulties. All our students suffer from social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, some with communication difficulties. About 10% of our students, on average, are Looked After Children, Children in Need or on the Child Protection Register.

5. TRAINING

Philpots has a programme of in-service and externally-provided training for all staff. Training in the needs of students with different disabilities is a part of this. There are six days a year of training for all staff and also a regular training programme for Residential Care staff, as well as individual NVQ 3 training for permanent Care staff.

We do not currently have any students needing signing but we do have one member of staff trained in Makaton. We would consider providing more specialised training if it were necessary to meet the needs of a child.

6. PLAYGROUND ACTIVITIES

A range of after-school activities are provided to cater for the choices of all students. All students are able to access these with an appropriate individualised level of support from Care staff.

The open, tranquil playgrounds at Philpots cater for the needs of some of our autistic students who prefer quiet and space as well as for the more active students who play football, basketball or ride bikes at lunchtime and after school.

7. CURRICULUM

The curriculum of Philpots Manor School is based on the Steiner Waldorf curriculum and is designed for each class by the Class Teacher, according to the academic and social and emotional needs of the class at the time. The work is differentiated and presented in a way and in a format appropriate for each student.

8. STAFFING

Each class has a teacher and a teaching assistant. The assistant is deployed by the teacher to enable each student to learn most effectively. This may mean by 1:1 assistance, focusing attention or giving instruction, or by working with two or more students. A class of up to six students would have one assistant while a class of seven or eight would have two assistants. In addition, some students have allocated 1:1 funding and an assistant would be allocated to that student, though they would be directed by the teacher.

9. ACADEMIC ABILITY RANGE

The academic ability range of Philpots students ranges from P Levels to students undertaking BTec courses at a local College while continuing to live and study at Philpots. All students have their individual academic needs met at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way. This highly personalised approach is long-established at Philpots and students are able, at their own pace, to study to GCSE level at school and to their own individual limits at local Colleges, funded by Philpots.

10. ASSESSMENT

Philpots uses the BSquared Small Steps software for ongoing assessing of individual students' abilities in English, Maths and Science in the National Curriculum from P Levels to Level 5. Thereafter most students will be undertaking GCSE or Entry Level courses in these subjects and will have external assessment and moderation of coursework. National Open College Network courses are externally moderated.

11. CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

Residential students have regular House meeting where they are given the opportunity to discuss issues they have concerns about. These often include requests for specific activities or individual concerns the students have.

All students have the same Class Teacher for a number of years and this allows the relationship between students and their teachers to build up the trust necessary to have open and frank discussions on a number of sensitive topics. These include bullying, relationships between pupils, individual differences between students and their religion, cultural ethos, sexual orientation and disabilities. Our students are encouraged to discuss their disabilities in an appropriate and informed way and to respect the differing needs of all.

12. CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS

Many of our parents have had to struggle to achieve a Statement of Special Educational Need for their child. Some parents have had to go to a Tribunal to get agreement from their Local Authority to fund a place at Philpots. Many have experienced their children failing in a succession of schools before they come to Philpots.

Most residential students live in small groups of six students with a Senior Houseparent who lives permanently in the unit. These family-style units help our students feel safe and well-cared for. The Houseparents regularly speak with the student's parents or guardians.

Day students come in by taxi. A home/school book will be used if there are particular messages or issues, such as homework, that need to be conveyed. Usually parents or Houseparents keep in touch by phone.

There is a half-termly newsletter that keeps parents in touch with what is happening at school but, increasingly, parents contact us by e-mail. This allows direct, to-the-point, communication that often averts problems occurring.

13. CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

All our students are paid for by Local Authorities and we encourage SEN Officers, Educational Psychologists, Connexions PAs and Social Workers to attend Annual Education Reviews. We hold Looked After Reviews at School to encourage closer working with interested parties.

We work very closely with West Sussex Connexions and their School's PA interviews each post-14 student each year. Those who are approaching transition are met regularly to ensure co-operation with their local PA and a smooth transition to home, maintained school or College or supported living.

All interested parties receive the half-termly newsletter as well as reports for all reviews and end-of-year reports.

THE MAIN PRIORITIES IN THE SCHOOL'S PLAN

1. CURRICULUM

The Philpots curriculum was re-evaluated and re-written in 2006. Sections on Citizenship and Music are still in need of renewal and re-evaluation and this will happen in 2009.

Individual aspects of the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum have received significant re-evaluation and have been researched and re-written between 2005 and 2009.

The bullying policies have been updated since 2006. A Cyber-bullying policy needs to be specifically developed in consultation with students, staff and parents.

The whole IT provision needs a re-evaluation in line with new trends, equipment and challenges. It was last reviewed in 2006 and much has changed subsequently, posing potential opportunities, but also risks, for our students. This should be completed within 2009/2010.

2. STAFFING

We should review the adequacy of training of teaching assistants and perhaps re-institute an in-school training programme. Currently, training is allocated or requested individually, and we benefit from many experienced and well-trained assistants. We should consider increasing in-house training. This should be up and running in 2010.

3. TRAINING

Current Seminar Training covers health and safety, Team Teach and whole staff trainings on disabilities and disorders, as well as topics such as music and speech and language. We should include disability awareness training in the next 12 months. We should ensure that teachers, who do not receive personal supervision, receive adequate educational training in the Seminar Days. Care staff have their own regular rolling programme but teachers have a more individualised, needs-based approach.

We should review areas of training for teachers. Training linked to Continuing Professional Development should become more routinely provided rather than responding to request. Some teachers undertake much individual training while others do less. Review in 2009.

4. ACTIVITIES

We should review current activities in 2009/2010 and consider providing a greater variety to meet the wishes of autistic students. We currently have lunchtime clubs for skipping and fitness, chess, circus and a green group. Students are also offered outside games and activities. Music groups, Science club or a choir at lunchtime might well interest some students.

5. IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL TO INCREASE THE EXTENT TO WHICH DISABLED PUPILS CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EDUCATION AND ASSOCIATED SERVICES

The main physical problems at Philpots are due to the fact that the School is 50 years old and much of its infrastructure was built 20 years or more ago. In the last three years the School has undertaken extensive research into the physical development and renewal of the site and its infrastructure that is needed. This research is being turned into a medium and long-term development plan which will need considerable resourcing over the next ten years. Meanwhile we are managing immediate physical needs. We are planning strategic development for the school as a whole for the next twenty years.

The DDA Accessibility Audit has been developed into a DDA Accessibility Plan (Appendix C). This covers the years 2008-2010 and focuses initially on paths, doorways and entrances, signage and disabled parking areas.

All accessibility work has been included in the School's Maintenance and Development Schedule which is reviewed by the Chair of Directors and Management Group monthly. There is a report on this weekly, by the Maintenance Co-ordinator, to the Management Group. The responsibility for progressing this work will be handed over to the new Estates and Health and Safety Co-ordinator, who will report directly to the Chair of Directors.

All decorating, physical improvements and electrical work should be carried out with future needs of disabled pupils, staff or members of the public in mind.

6. IMPROVING THE DELIVERY TO DISABLED PUPILS OF INFORMATION THAT IS PROVIDED IN WRITING FOR PUPILS WHO ARE NOT DISABLED

As a matter of course, those few pupils who are unable to access the written word as well as others have their work in simplified language or a form which they can manage. If we were to admit a student whose needs would not be met in this way then we would assess, as part of the Admissions process, how we would meet their needs.

CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND INTERESTED PARTIES

We put the draft DDA School Accessibility Plan on the website and informed parents via the half-termly newsletter. We asked for input and comments on the plan.

MANAGEMENT, COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

1. PLANNING PROCESS

The draft plan was written by the Education Co-ordinator and the Finance and Estates Co-ordinator. It was then consulted on and revised by the Teachers, Residential Staff and other staff and revisions made before it was agreed by the College of Staff and the Management Group. It was also put on the website and parents were informed via the half-termly newsletter. Comments and suggestions were made by parents.

2. REVIEW

The plan will be reviewed and revised annually by the College of Staff and the Management Group. Parents and other interested parties will be invited to make suggestions for amendments. The first review will take place in March 2010.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

Actions to be taken are the responsibility of the Chair of Directors, delegated to the Education Co-ordinator, Care Co-ordinator and Estates and Health and Safety Co-ordinator.

4. GETTING HOLD OF THE SCHOOL'S PLAN

The Accessibility Plan will be displayed on the School's website. It will be translated into another language if a parent requests it and it will be made available in hard copy by the School Office if requested. Details will be given in the newsletter.

Appendix A: Equal Opportunities Policy No.57, revised March 2009 (see Staff Handbook)

Appendix B: Admissions and Reception of Children Policy No.1, agreed July 2007 (See Staff Handbook)

Appendix C: DDA Physical Accessibility Action Plan 2008-2010, agreed 2008 (attached)

Appendix D Exclusion Policy No.62, agreed October 2005 (see Staff Handbook)