

Adaptations to Buildings and Specialist Equipment

Introduction:

Accessibility to school buildings is a partnership between Reading Borough Council (RBC), Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) and other providers to ensure that the needs of individual learners with disabilities are met. Since 2011, new providers of school places have been able to establish state-funded free schools, and now all new schools are deemed to be free schools. There are also a growing number of state funded schools that have converted to become academies, which are independent of local authority control. School places are no longer, therefore, solely provided or funded directly by Reading Borough Council and will include: Maintained Schools; Voluntary Controlled Schools; Voluntary Aided Schools; Academies/Free Schools (often part of a Multi Academy Trust); University Technical Colleges; and Studio Schools

Reasonable Adjustment Duty

The Equality Act requires schools and LAs to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled pupils are not at a substantial disadvantage and enable pupils to participate in education and associated services.

When deciding if a reasonable adjustment is necessary, schools, RBC and BFFC need to consider the potential impact on disabled pupils in terms of time and effort, inconvenience, indignity and discomfort, loss of opportunity and diminished progress

BFFC will be responsible for the early identification of pupils, liaison with parents and schools and recommendations for adaptations required for the pupil's specific needs and specialist equipment required equipment.

Responsibility for Funding Adaptations

Councils receive no dedicated access funding for adaptation, improvement or alteration at any schools. Therefore, funding from RBC or BFFC for accessibility improvements related to pupils joining or transferring to an individual school will need to be considered by the Council and BFFC as these priorities arise.

Adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools: Most, but not all adaptations in Voluntary Aided Schools are funded from the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) which provides funding at 90% of the cost; the final 10% falls to the Governing Body of the school, trustees or to the relevant Church Authority.

Adaptations in Academies: Academy Schools are independent of the Council and are funded directly by Central Government. Advice from DFE is that Councils (inc Brighter Futures for Children) should discuss the placement of a pupil with additional needs with an Academy prior to the issue of an Education Health and Care Plan and that the issue of costs and funding should form part of that discussion. The Academy may decline a placement where it cannot afford to make the necessary adaptations.

Revenue funding requests for specialist equipment will be managed and determined by Brighter Futures for Children SEND Team

Capital Funding from Reading Borough Council for building adaptations will be managed and determined by Reading Borough Council

Where physical alterations are required to a school building, the responsibility for implementing and funding the work will rest with Reading Borough Council (RBC) or the school/responsible body or both, depending on the nature of the work required.

Funding to support adaptations in schools comes from a variety of sources including:

- Funding made available to schools by Reading Borough Council
- Funding made available to schools by BFFC
- Other responsible bodies such as Multi Academy Trusts and individual school budgets.

Schools and responsible bodies are expected to continue to improve access through repair and maintenance as part of school conditions work; in-line with the equality Act 2010. BFFC SEN Team will liaise with schools to ensure they all have updated School Accessibility Statements along with their SEN policy which they should make public on their website. As part of the statement schools should carry out regular audits of the building which should generate actions for improvements to be included within their Asset Management Plans for improving accessibility. Schools should be actively identifying and planning improvements into their budgeting as matter of course. They will also be expected to fund the provision of most specialist equipment and fittings. For example, ICT equipment, specialist furniture, signage and other smaller items of work.

Where complex physical adaptations are required, planning must begin at least 12 months ahead of transition. Schools and SEND case officers need to give adequate notice to the Council, obtain landlord consent and obtain agreement for any funding from RBC. This would allow the time for any necessary Planning and listed building consents, building control applications and procurement processes in line with RBC Standing Orders.

Funding:

- **Capital Funding** – used to fund where applicable physical changes to buildings or school grounds. Managed by RBC Education Asset Management Team
- **Revenue Funding** – used to fund specialist equipment, where applicable. Managed by Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) SEND Team

Ongoing Maintenance

Once the LA has funded an adaptation; its upkeep and maintenance is then the school's responsibility. If a pupil moves and the school no longer needs a facility (e.g. a hygiene or physiotherapy room) the Governing Body must consult the Council about any change to the room/facility; if subsequently the facility is needed again, this re-instatement will then be the financial responsibility of the Governing Body.

General Accessibility

Schools will continue to be fully responsible for funding any adaptations required to comply with requirements of the Equality Act 2010 for the community hire of their premises. As a minimum, the adaptations should meet the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations and the British Standard 'code of practice' BS8300

Schools and responsible bodies will be expected to continue to improve access through repair and maintenance work that is undertaken in schools.

When schools and/or responsible bodies are undertaking their own building projects, the Council will not provide any funding to support the cost of providing any of the above where they are required in order to meet statutory requirements to provide accessible facilities. (E.g. to comply with Building Regulations) or other relevant guidance (e.g. to meet recommendations in BB93/BB104). Access issues should be built into each school's Asset Management Planning processes.

Typical adaptations to improve accessibility and who is responsible for funding (the list of adaptations is not exhaustive) –

Typical Adaptations Required for Individual Disabled Pupils and responsibility:

- Ramps RBC
- Installation of lifts including building work (RBC)
- Create accessible toilets/changing areas - RBC
- Install/replace doors to meet requirements for non-ambulant users - RBC
- Automated door openers and electronic hold open devices - RBC
- Installation of grab rails and handrails over and above the needs of other building users - RBC
- Drop kerbs OCC Acoustic improvement works such as false ceilings and wall boards - RBC
- Installation of fixed equipment e.g. track hoist, height adjustable bed, washer-dryer toilet to include survey and liaison with supplier – Brighter Futures for Children
- Provision of secure fencing to create a safe environment to prevent escape, on an exceptional basis only where there is a specific need over and above what would ordinarily be required for the school to comply with its safeguarding duties - RBC
- Repairs and maintenance (e.g. doors, floor surfaces etc) - School/Responsible Body
- Install viewing panels at various heights to doors for increased visibility - School/Responsible Body
- Replace door furniture or addition of high handles - School/Responsible Body
- Adaptations to entrance matting/trip hazards/flush door detail - School/Responsible Body
- Remove trip hazards on external circulation routes, such as uneven paving, pot holes and tree roots - School/Responsible Body
- Replace car park line markings for disabled car park spaces - School/Responsible Body
- Basic induction loop for a reception area - School/Responsible Body
- Install audio link/call bell from main entrance door to reception area - School/Responsible Body
- Visual and tactile warning signs for various requirements – To include Braille signs where required, position of visual indicators - School/Responsible Body
- Redecorate wall/ceiling finishes with colour differentiated Schemes - School/Responsible Body
- Improved signage throughout the site and buildings - School/Responsible Body
- Use of appropriate lighting, blinds, whiteboards with matt finish - School/Responsible Body

***In all cases Schools/Responsible Bodies will be expected to fund low cost individual items**

Schools Access Framework

Although a large proportion of maintained schools have a reasonable level of accessibility, there will continue to be the need for adaptations in schools to meet the needs of individual pupils, teachers and other school staff, parents and carers.

- **The Schools Access Framework (appendix A):** A key element of our Accessibility Strategy, the Schools Access Framework sets out a process when physical adaptations need to be made to a school(s). This includes investment needed to in relation to specialist equipment. All admissions applications which may require funding will be co-ordinated and reviewed on an individual basis by Schools Sufficiency and Capital Group (SSCG) in accordance with the eligibility criteria as set out in the overarching Accessibility Strategy.
 - Whether the school is the child's catchment or nearest qualifying school.
 - Evidence of individual need which requires reasonable adjustment.
 - Proximity of alternative accessible schools.
 - Whether the cost / impact of any adjustments would be viewed as effective use of public resources.
 - Overall feasibility of any proposed works.

Acceptance of a referral does not constitute a commitment to delivery or funding. The Education Asset Management Team and BfFC SEN Team will provide advice on the level, cost and feasibility of any works. SSCG will ensure early identification of pupils, provide an overview of the application and ensure co-ordination between BfFC, RBC and the school. If the project is viable BfFC will contact the school and lead on the overall liaison. RBC will manage the physical adaptations and oversee that part of the work. The school will be responsible for any future maintenance, repair or training related to the reasonable adjustments that are delivered. BfFC SEND Team will advise on, order and arrange installation (via supplier) of any specialist equipment and liaise with RBC to ensure suitability to physical environment.

- **Schools Access Referral Form (appendix B):** An Access Referral Form will be completed by the SEND Team at BfFC for all requests for capital funding. Access Referral Forms will be submitted to the Schools Sufficiency and Capital Group for recommendation. Capital Funding from RBC will be at RBC's discretion. Funding from BfFC will be determined by BfFC.
- **Governance:** The Schools Sufficiency and Capital Group (SSCG), chaired by the Director of Education (BfFC) and Vice-Chaired by Deputy Director for Transport and Planning (RBC), will provide oversight for early identification of pupils and their needs and any resultant school adaptations via a standing agenda item at each termly meeting.

Pro-active adaptations requiring capital funding

There is a requirement on schools/ BfFC to notify RBC of access needs.

BfFC must work in partnership with other bodies to identify children with SEN and physical access requirements at the Early Years stage whether they are in Educational setting or not. This will allow early liaison with parents about future school placements. BfFC should not limit their awareness to only pupils with EHCP's

Parents need to identify on the school admission forms that their child has physical access requirements. BfFC Admissions Team must notify the SEND Team as soon as these forms are submitted – not waiting until places are confirmed.

Schools must consider the needs of individual pupils prior to admission and, where necessary, plan in partnership with other agencies to meet these needs.

For children with access needs known to the authority who are transferring schools, the appropriate SEND officers will begin to support the school in preparing for their admission in the year prior to admission. A similar approach will be taken to provide for pupils starting school for the first time.

There will be a presumption against agreeing a school place until discussions (or formal consultation if an Education Health Care Plan is in place) have taken place with that establishment about its capacity to accommodate the needs of the relevant pupil. The school, Council and BfFC will use 'best endeavours' to enable placement according to parental preference.

When admitting a disabled pupil, schools should ensure that all planning is done well in advance. Schools should consider carefully the needs of the individual pupil and the works required with the SEND case officer and communicate with the Council about the changes required.

Consideration should be given to whether adaptations at the school provide the best value for money as well as meeting the pupils needs. There may be another school that is already accessible and can better suit the needs of the child. A cost analysis of potential transportation of the child for the duration of their term in school should be made in comparison to the cost of undertaking the required adaptations at the school

Re-active adaptations requiring capital funding:

- Where adaptations are needed in-year, a school, the SEND team or other agency can refer a child who has access considerations to SSCG, via the School's Access Referral Form. Once the form is received by the SSCG, the process follows that set out above.

(Appendix A) Adaptation Process – for work requiring capital funding

REFERRAL

Schools / SEND Team or other Agency **Identifies** a Need

The SEND team **liaise and consult** with the 'health' professionals and school to **ascertain the needs of the child**

Confirm placement with admissions

Schools Access Referral form to Schools Capital Group and asset management team asap

Should the school place be confirmed by admissions at this stage, we would not incur costs of putting proposals together unless the option for a particular school have been agreed.

REVIEW

Request for capital investment considered **Schools Capital Group**

Further information needed

Response to referrer and School confirming acceptance

PROGRESS

Guide cost or feasibility study with programme and costs

Scoping visit by **Asset Management** and **SEND** to prepare **recommended option**

Consult with School

Schools Capital Group **agrees** recommended option and recommended **delivery method** for physical building works

Asset Management inform School

DELIVERY

Project Initiation – asset management team (SEND team for specialist equipment)

Asset Management updates Capital Group

Asset Management team manages **project delivery and completion** for physical work and SEND for equipment

Asset Management updates School on progress

EVALUATION

Capital Group issues follow up **questionnaire** to schools and reports learning to the Capital Group

Appendix B: Schools Access Referral Form

School Access Referral Form		
Please send all referral forms to: nikki.stevens@brighterfuturesforchildren.org		
Refers name: (refer will be point of contact for the referral form)	Date:	Referrers organisation:
School name	Name Area	
Headteacher name		
School status	Local Authority maintained – Yes / No Academy – Yes / No / Converting Community / Foundation / VA / VC	
Pupils name		
Pupils D.O.B		
Pupils home address		
Does the child have an EHCP?	Yes / No / Under Assessment	
<p>What are the pupils needs? (please provide as much detail as possible)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and interaction _____ • Cognition and learning _____ • Social, mental and emotional health _____ • Sensory or physical _____ • Other _____ 		
Proposed reasonable adjustment(s) and how will reasonable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps _____ • Provision of sound field systems _____ 	

<p>adjustment(s) support the pupil?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of fixed equipment e.g. track hoist, height adjustable bed, washer-dryer toilet _____ • Acoustic improvement works such as false ceilings and wall boards _____ • Drop kerbs _____ • Installation of several grab rails and handrails over and above the needs of other building users _____ • Automated door openers and electronic hold open devices ____ • Install/replace doors to meet requirements for non-ambulant users _____ • Create accessible toilets/changing areas _____ • Installation of lifts including building works _____ • Other _____
<p>Key issues in relation to proposed reasonable adjustment? (including any practical issues)</p>	<p>ie, strengthening a ceiling (capital funded) for a hoist (revenue funded)</p>
<p>When is the work required? (pupils start date)</p>	
<p>What consultation has taken place? (ie, parents, school OT etc)</p>	
<p>Additional info: Headteacher letter / site visit report or options paper?</p>	
<p>Administration Only:</p>	<p>Date referral form received by nikki.stevens@brighterfuturesforchildren.org _____</p> <p>Referral form / information added to Schools Access Tracker? (send to paul.gresty@brighterfuturesforchildren.org) _____</p>