Castle Garden School

Accessibility Plan 2026-2029

Policy Folder:
Safeguarding

The purpose of this document

This policy and attached plan reflect the values and ethos of Castle Garden School relating to accessibility.

The purpose of which is to set out a framework that all staff are able to operate within. This policy is written with due regard with the Disability Discrimination Act, as amended by the SEN and Disability Act (SENDA).

It draws on the guidance set out in "Accessible Schools: Planning to increase access to schools for disabled pupils", issued by the DCSF.

Castle Garden School is an independent special school for autistic pupils and those with associated needs aged 5-18. The school operates across two sites, Castle Garden and Castle Gate, providing a continuum of provision from Year 1 through to Post-16. The school is committed to ensuring equitable access to education, therapeutic support, facilities, enrichment opportunities and information for all pupils, staff, parents and visitors across both sites.

The school offers places to pupils who have complex needs. Many of our pupils have experienced early childhood trauma, including school-based, and have had significant periods of time out of school/chronic low attendance or working in isolation without peer interaction.

- **we are committed to providing an accessible environment which values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs.**
- **we are committed to challenging negative attitudes about disability and accessibility and to developing a culture of awareness, tolerance and inclusion.**
- **compliance with the DDA is consistent with the school's aims and equal opportunities policy, and the operation of the school's SEN policy; The school recognises its duty under the DDA (as amended by the SENDA).**
- **not to discriminate against disabled pupils in their admissions and exclusions, and provision of education and associated services.**
- **not to treat disabled pupils less favourably.**
- **to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage**
- **the Accessibility Plan will be drawn up to cover a three-year period. The plan will be updated annually.**

Definition of Disability

Disability is defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA):

"A person has 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 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.

Normal day-to-day activity

The test of whether the 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

The Accessibility Plan will be reported upon annually in respect of progress and outcomes and provide a projected plan for the three-year period ahead of the next review date. This reflects new statutory requirements for the setting of Equality Objectives.

The Accessibility Plan is structured to complement and support the school's Equality Objectives. We are committed to providing an environment that enables full curriculum access that values and includes all students, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional and cultural needs. We are committed to taking positive action in the spirit of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to disability and to reinforcing our culture of inclusion, support and awareness within the school. The Castle Garden School Accessibility Plan shows how access is to be improved for pupils with disabilities, staff and visitors to the

school in a given timeframe and anticipating the need to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs where practicable.

Key Objectives

All staff at Castle Garden are committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive environment. We will continue to develop the school with the following objectives in mind:

- To reduce and eliminate barriers to access to the curriculum and to full participation in the school community for pupils, and prospective pupils, with a disability.
- Improve access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary. This covers reasonable adjustments to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education.
- Increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a disability, expanding and making reasonable adjustments to the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with a disability access the best opportunities.
- Improve and make reasonable adjustments to the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities. Examples might include hand-outs, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events. The information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable time frame.
- Ensure accessibility is embedded within the development and ongoing operation of both Castle Garden and Castle Gate, with consistent approaches to curriculum access, communication, physical environments and reasonable adjustments across all phases from Year 1 to Post-16.

In performing their duties, management and staff will have regard to the DRC Code of Practice (2002).

The school recognises and values parents' knowledge of their child's disability and its effect on their ability to carry out normal activities and respects the parents' and child's right to confidentiality. The school provides all pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, differentiated and adapted to meet the needs of individual pupils and their preferred learning styles.

Through the provision of a rich, broad, and balanced curriculum we will:

- set suitable learning challenges

- respond to pupils' diverse learning needs, recognising that these needs may change over time
- overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils

1. Curriculum

The Current Position

- The school's data system is available for all staff
- Advanced planning for students based on good information from the placing/funding Local Authority
- Liaison with external services and agencies regarding individual pupils (physical, sensory, behaviour)
- High-quality clinical profiles and risk assessments
- Providing tiered intervention
- Developing outstanding learning and teaching across the school
- Progress reviews enable all pupils to discuss their learning in a way appropriate to them
- Using Evidence for Learning (EFL) data to measure the progress and achievement of all students and set attainable targets with high expectations
- Ensuring that school visits and trips are accessible for all students
- Using a range of teaching methods and styles to facilitate access for all students – e.g. appropriate use of language; questioning techniques; pair work; group work; 'mind-friendly' learning techniques to suit all learning styles – visual/ auditory /kinesthetic, etc.
- Smaller teaching groups
- Development of mutual support and understanding between colleagues in working with pupils with disabilities
- Curriculum pathways have been extended to support pupils from Year 1 to Post-16.
- Transition pathways are in place between Castle Garden and Castle Gate to support progression through the school.
- Careers education, preparation for adulthood and employability opportunities are embedded within the secondary and Post-16 curriculum.
- Accessibility considerations are incorporated into curriculum planning across both sites.

Increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a physical disability and/or sensory impairments, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that all pupils are prepared for their next steps (If a school fails to do this they are in breach of their duties under the Equalities Act 2010); this covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in enrichments, leisure and cultural activities or schools visits – it also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum within a reasonable timeframe;

ACCESSIBILITY PLAN 2026 - 2029

	Actions	Timescale	Success Criteria
During assessment identify if a pupil requires specialist equipment to access the curriculum	- Identify and source specialist equipment - Staff to access training in auxiliary equipment if needed	Ongoing – takes place during assessment process prior to admission, Clinical input will be identified	Pupils arrive at school with the appropriate equipment and resources needed to access learning
Identify appropriate clinical input and therapeutic support	- Joined up working during admission stage - Identify clinical and therapeutic support (SALT, OT, Clinical)	Ongoing	Pupils' learning will be supported by appropriate clinical and therapeutic services. This could include SALT support, sensory profiling etc.
Produce an annual plan outlining a range of activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	- Link to cultural events and curriculum links - All staff to contribute to the plan and implementation of plan	Ongoing – takes place every September during inset day	Pupils participate in a range of activities alongside the taught curriculum to widen their experiences and support growth and development
Review enrichment activities	- Through Pupil Voice identify activities pupils would like to participate in - Contact parents/carers to ensure pupils can access	Termly	Pupils will access a range of chosen, enrichment activities to support their personal, social and emotional development
Ensure that pupils entering KS1 have access to EYFS learning goals where appropriate. Some children entering EYFS have not attended any formal educational setting prior to attending Castle Garden.	- Follow admissions process and identify appropriate route into learning	Ongoing	Pupils who are not ready to engage in formal KS1 curriculum outcomes will benefit wholly from the varied experiences and opportunities of an EYFS offer.

Review 'Bringing Learning to Life' document annually	- **Teachers to identify through planning core aspects of their curriculum and support these with educational trips and visits to enrich the learning experience**	**Annual**	**Pupils will engage in a range of purposeful educational visits linked directly to learning outcomes. This will support with knowledge retention and help pupils to commit learning to long term memory**
Carry out annual curriculum reviews to ensure pupils can access as broad a curriculum as possible for as long as possible	**All staff to research own curriculum areas to identify accredited routes and experiences**	**Annual**	**The curriculum will be continually developed, allowing pupils to study as broadly as possible for as long as possible.**
Ensure accessibility across both school sites	**Annual accessibility audits of Castle Garden and Castle Gate**	**Annual**	**Consistent accessibility standards maintained across both sites**
Support safe movement between phases	**Review transition arrangements between primary and secondary provision**	**Annual**	**Pupils successfully access age-appropriate provision**
Ensure accessibility of Key Stage 4 and Post-16 provision	**Review facilities, learning spaces and resources against individual needs**	**Ongoing**	**Students access Preparation for Adulthood curriculum effectively**
Maintain accessible information and signage across both sites	**Review site signage, wayfinding and visual supports annually**	**Annual**	**Visitors and pupils navigate both sites independently where appropriate**

2. **Improve access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary - this covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education within a reasonable timeframe;**

The Current Position

In summary the school property meets the following material requirements:

- Level car park
- Ramped access from car park to entrance, apart from 2 steps at base of ramp
- Intercom access at front and rear entrances
- Level rear access and drop off zone within the school envelop to provide safe drop offs for pupils away from road access when required
- Level internal circulation space
- All clear door widths suitable for wheel-chair access
- Compliant toilet facilities
- All internal areas appropriately lit
- Contrasting door frames and skirting boards

Priorities for 2026-2029

The forward plan will be developed in response to pupils, staff and other stakeholder's needs. The criteria for adapting existing or providing alternative arrangements will be assessed against individual's specific needs. This may include but not be limited to:

- Embedding accessibility across both Castle Garden and Castle Gate.
- Supporting full access to the expanded 5-18 curriculum offer.
- Enhancing Preparation for Adulthood and Secondary learning environments.
- Maintaining accessible therapeutic, sensory and outdoor learning spaces across both sites.
- Ensuring smooth transitions between educational phases.
- Developing accessible communication systems and digital platforms for families and stakeholders.

This builds upon the existing commitment to physical environment, curriculum and written information accessibility.

The Accessibility Plan relates to the key aspects of physical environment, curriculum and written information. Whole school training will recognise the need to continue raising awareness for staff and governors on equality issues with reference to the Equality Act 2010.
The Accessibility Plan should not be read in isolation and other school policies should be considered; these include (but not limited to):

- Curriculum Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- School Behaviour Policy
- School Improvement Plan
- School Brochure

- Improve and maintain access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary – this covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education within a reasonable timeframe;

Target	Actions	Timescale	Success Criteria
Continually develop the school grounds to enrich the sensory experiences for pupils	**Work continually with clinical colleagues to develop opportunities for sensory integration**	**Ongoing**	**Pupils in need of sensory stimulation and deep pressure will be able to access in a safe manner**

3. **Improve the delivery of written information to students, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities; examples might include hand-outs, visual timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events; the information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.**

Written information -The Current Position

- Visual timetables are produced for all pupils
- Class activities and tasks are carefully differentiated and adapted to ensure they are in line with pupil cognitive ability, regulation and sensory needs
- Wellbeing support plans in place for all pupils
- Zones of regulation accessible throughout school
- Family Room is available for consultation with Parents/carers
- Weekly Class Newsletter in a suitable format
- Whole School Newsletters to be completed termly from July 24 in a suitable format

- Improve the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with special educational needs and/or disabilities; examples might include hand-outs, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events; the information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.

Target	**Actions**	**Timescale**	**Success Criteria**
Ensure written material is accessible to all stakeholders	- **Ensure that support is provided to access written information where needed**	**Ongoing**	**Parents and visitors will have be able to request accessible information**
Support parents to develop their own literacy skills where appropriate.	- **Establish a team of staff who are able to support adults with:** o **reading Skills** o **writing Skills** o **speaking and listening** o **basic numeracy**	**Ongoing**	**Parents will be more confident in supporting children's needs**

Visual timetables and child accessible safeguarding information is in every classroom	**Laminated pictures and visuals indicating activities and requests for support for pupils to use, to be reviewed weekly as pictures and visuals may change or get damaged**	**Ongoing**	**Communication of pupils' needs will be enhanced and supported**
Visual labels for equipment inside and outside of the school building	**Any equipment, furniture or location that can be accessed by pupils is labelled**	**Ongoing**	**Communication is encouraged and pupils use of language is supported**

Following the approval of the school's material change in July 2026 and expansion to educate pupils aged 5-18 across two sites, the school will continually review its accessibility arrangements to ensure that all pupils, regardless of age, disability or need, can participate fully in school life. Accessibility considerations will form part of all future site developments, curriculum reviews and strategic planning processes.