

# Dorset Council Children's Services Accessibility Strategy 2022 to 2025



## Welcome



This Accessibility Strategy is about how we will make our pre-schools, schools and colleges more accessible for children and young people with disabilities.



It also looks at how we can get more people to think about making places accessible in Dorset.



## What accessibility means

Accessibility means making sure a person with a disability can do what they need to do as quickly and easily as someone who does not have a disability.

## What disability and special educational needs (SEND) mean



A person who has disabilities:

- may have problems with their health
- may find it harder to do things than other people

A child or young person who has special educational needs may:



- find it harder to learn than other people of their age
- face challenges that make it hard to go to school or college
- need extra or different support to learn

## Why we have an Accessibility Strategy



The Government's Equality Act says we must write an Accessibility Strategy for our schools to say how we will:

- have more access to what children and young people with disabilities need to learn; this is called the curriculum
- make schools and information more accessible so that children and young people with disabilities can do all that is on offer



Schools must write an Accessibility Plan that can be found on the school's website or by asking the school for a copy.





## Reasonable adjustments

Early years settings and Further Education (FE) colleges do not have to write an Accessibility Plan but they do have to make reasonable adjustments.



We need our schools and settings to make sure that a child with a disability can join in the same as everyone else by making reasonable adjustments with help like good access, more time and easy read information.



We always need to plan ahead and think about how we can best help children and young people with disabilities.



## What we hope will happen

We hope the Accessibility Strategy will help our children and young people with disabilities to feel welcome and included in their school or setting.



We want them to access the curriculum, and their school and college settings.



They should have access to information and have all their needs met.



We want them to be involved in discussions about their support, and that they are listened to and respected.

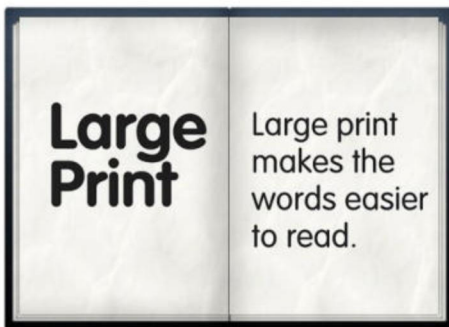
## What our children and young people with disabilities told us



It's important to have trained staff who understand their needs and listen to what they are concerned about.



Make sure other pupils understand about disability.



Large print books.



More outings and activities that are well advertised.



Able to learn independent living skills.

## What parents and carers told us



Many parents and carers did not know about the Accessibility Strategy or that schools have Accessibility Plans.



We asked them what helps their child take part and feel included at school. They told us:



- being made to feel welcome with lots of communication and opportunities to take part in all activities



- staff with good knowledge about disabilities



They told us it's not good when staff don't know much about disabilities and there is no good communication so pupils' views are not listened to.



## We asked parents and carers about what they liked about life in Dorset for their child:

- getting information about upcoming events and activities



- going to places where staff are friendly and welcoming



- having community groups and holiday clubs



## Things that parents and carers did not like:

- there weren't many activities and events with some being far away, and information about them was hard to find



- staff needed more training about supporting children with disabilities



## What our schools, early years settings and colleges told us

They were happy about including everyone, listening to the child or young person and having good links with staff and parents.



### Some of the problems with accessibility were:

- older buildings were not always accessible
- finding suitable outings and activities
- having to wait a long time for help from professional people



They told us that they would like more information about funding for support, training courses for staff and help to understand of disabilities.





## What information we hold (our data) tells us

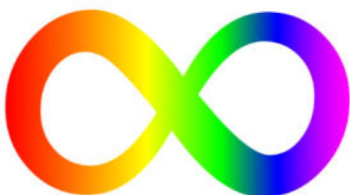
In Dorset we support a range of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They include:



- speech, language and communication needs



- social, emotional and mental health needs



- autism
- physical difficulties
- hearing and/or vision impairments
- learning difficulties



## About our schools and educational places

Most children and young people with a disability go to a local mainstream school where they get special help.



Some children and young people need more special support. In Dorset, we have several special schools.

We are always looking at ways to give better special help to make sure Dorset children and young people get the best education.

## What we have done so far



In 2021, we helped schools to develop a good Accessibility Plan that showed we need to involve children, young people, their families, and wider school staff.

We also asked schools to look at how well they are organised to help with disabilities and how things turn out for pupils with a disability.

We will carry on with this work.

## What we are going to do



We have found four pieces of work in the Accessibility Strategy that we will work on over the next three years.

### Priority one

#### Help children and young people with disabilities take part in the curriculum more

We will do this by:



- talking about accessibility when working with schools



- letting people know about the Dorset Graduated Approach that helps schools to be person-centred, more accessible, and give support and training



- helping Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to meet up, share good ideas and keep up to date with what's going on



**Priority two: Make the layout of schools and other education settings better so that children and young people with disabilities can make use of everything on offer**

We will do this by helping with advice to make the layout of each school and college better and by using money well.



**Priority three: Making sure that children and young people with disabilities in schools and other education settings are given good information**

We will do this through actions, such as:

- giving help and advice to each pupil and always use plain English and lots of other accessible formats



- publishing an Education Services Brochure for schools and settings and keep making things better



- promoting online services to support good physical and mental health

## Priority four: Work with Dorset Council and other organisations to:



- help them to know about what stops places being accessible so that children and young people with disabilities have the same opportunities as those without



- helping to build good relationships between children and young people who are disabled and those who are not

We will do this by:



- welcoming other organisations, sharing ideas and helping to let people all over the county know about disabilities



- including children and young people with disabilities in our leaflets and booklets



- training people who work for us about supporting disabilities



- helping to make health care pathways better



- making sure that everyone knows that there is accessible information about activities and opportunities



- working with our colleges to increase knowledge about accessibility problems



**What we need our schools and settings to do for children and young people with disabilities is set out in the Accessibility Strategy.**

They need to make sure they have an Accessibility Plan or reasonable adjustments in place and that they keep checking these.

## How we will know if we have made a difference

We will use different ways to check if the Accessibility Strategy is working such as:



- using surveys to ask children and young people, parents and carers how they feel about how good the access is at their school or setting, and in Dorset



- Asking people working in schools and settings



- checking school Accessibility Plans
- look at how well the training given to schools and settings about supporting disabilities is going



## Making sure that the Accessibility Strategy is working

The Children's Services Senior Leadership Team are in charge of the Accessibility Strategy.



It will be reviewed by a group of people called the Strategic Alliance Board for Children and Young People.



The Accessibility Strategy will be checked and made better if necessary. It will be updated after 3 years.