

School Accessibility Strategy 2025-27

Wolverhampton is proud of the educational achievements of its children and young people. High-quality education is central to the city's growth and success and improving access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is essential to ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation in society, and access to future employment and independence.

This Accessibility Strategy sets out the Council's approach to increasing access to education for children and young people with disabilities, enabling them to gain the maximum benefit from their time in education. It supports inclusive practice across all settings and smooth transitions between providers, including into and out of Alternative Provision.

The strategy is underpinned by legal duties set out in the Equality Act 2010, which replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and incorporated the planning duty introduced by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. Under Part 6, Section 88 (Schedule 10) of the Equality Act, local authorities are required to prepare and implement an accessibility strategy for the schools they maintain.

Under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, Local Authorities in England and Wales must prepare, implement, and review a written accessibility strategy for maintained schools they are responsible for and ensure the strategy addresses:

- Curriculum access for disabled pupils.
- Physical access to school buildings and facilities.
- Accessible delivery of information to disabled pupils.

Academy schools are encouraged to align with this strategy voluntarily.

School Duties under the Equality Act 2010

1. General Duty (Public Sector Equality Duty)

Schools must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.
- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people.
- Foster positive attitudes and encourage participation of disabled people in public life.
- Make adjustments that may involve treating disabled people more favourably.

This duty applies to pupils, staff, parents/carers, and other users of the school.

2. Specific Duty

Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, schools must:

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Set and publish equality objectives, including those related to disability.

These requirements ensure that schools continue to take a strategic approach to promoting disability inclusion.

3. Reasonable Adjustments Duty

Schools and Local Authorities must make reasonable adjustments to avoid placing disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage. This includes consideration of:

- Time and effort required by the pupil.
- Inconvenience or discomfort.
- Loss of opportunity or diminished progress.

Types of adjustments may include:

- Auxiliary aids and services (e.g., adapted equipment, support staff).
- Changes to policies or practices (e.g., uniform rules, behaviour policies).
- Anticipatory planning for future pupils with disabilities.

4. Accessibility Plan Requirements

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will improve access to education for disabled pupils over time.

The Accessibility Plan should:

- Be published on the school website.
- Be available in hard copy upon request.
- Be linked to the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) information.

Key Data

- Based on Spring School Census 2025, there are 9,897 pupils resident in the city who receive additional and specialist support.
- There are 1,093 pupils on role in the 8 Special Schools.
- 8,804 pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are supported in mainstream settings.

Every local area is required to have Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA), for further information on the City's demographics please visit **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment SEND - SEN Primary Needs**.

Scope and Key Aims

Improving access to education for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a key priority for the City of Wolverhampton Council. Achieving this requires strong collaboration across

education, health, social care, and community partners, working together with families to remove barriers and promote inclusion.

The UK Government's commitment to inclusive education is reflected in the SEND Code of Practice (2015), which highlights the progressive removal of barriers to learning and participation in mainstream education. The Children and Families Act 2014 reinforces the presumption of mainstream education for children and young people with SEND, while the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination and places a duty on local authorities to plan for accessibility.

This Accessibility Strategy forms part of a wider suite of strategic plans aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people with both visible and invisible disabilities. It aligns with and informs the following key documents:

- Wolverhampton SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2027
- Asset Management Plans
- Schools' Accessibility Plans
- Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015–2025
- Education Excellence Strategy 2024–2027
- Our City: Our Plan – The City of Wolverhampton Council Plan

Underpinned by the Children and Families Act 2014; this strategy outlines the Council's approach to identifying and addressing accessibility challenges across education settings. The following three statutory aims guide its delivery:

1. Increasing the extent to which pupils with special educational needs and/or disability can participate in the school curriculum;
2. Improving the physical environment of schools to enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disability to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided.
3. Improving the delivery of information to pupils with special educational needs and/or disability.

AIM 1: Increasing the extent to which pupils with special educational needs and/or disability can participate in the curriculum

This will be achieved by:

1. Providing on-going guidance and training to schools to support them in the effective implementation of Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014
2. Collecting and disseminating examples of good practice across the city and the wider educational community
3. Providing information and support to ensure continued professional development in the area of special educational need, disability and inclusion is considered a priority within schools.
4. Ensuring continued access to advice and support through centrally maintained specialist services and partner organisations.

5. Providing targeted support to schools through Wolverhampton's outreach services, which offer classroom-based strategies, staff training, curriculum planning advice, and modelling of inclusive practices.
6. Enhancing inclusive curriculum access through the Attune Project, which embeds trauma-informed and attachment-aware practices to foster emotional wellbeing, safe relationships, and inclusive learning environments. Schools seeking Gold Status will be expected to share their inclusion best practice beyond their own setting, contributing to a city-wide culture of collaboration and excellence in SEND provision.
7. Working with schools to ensure that relevant information is readily available to support access on entry to/transfer between schools, and transition in and out of Alternative Provision.
8. Ensuring schools regularly review their accessibility plans.
9. Ensure that support is available for schools with pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities who have English as an additional language through specialist CWC services.

AIM 2: Improving the physical environment of schools to enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disability to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided

This will be achieved by:

1. Supporting schools in reviewing the physical access audit of their premises and ensuring they understand their responsibilities, in order to increase the number of children, whose needs are met within the city. Guidance and assistance can be sought through the City Assets team.
2. Provide guidance and disseminate good practice on how a school's physical environment should be adapted to support the needs of children and young people with Special Educational needs and disabilities.
3. Ensuring that the Planning Authority monitors all building projects carried out centrally or by schools to address accessibility issues.
4. Providing schools with advice on disability and accessibility issues. Creating a climate in which schools always identify "inclusivity" as a main priority whenever any change to the physical environment is proposed.
5. Making external specialist resources available to schools, including:
 - Specialist outreach teams offering advice on improving acoustic environments for pupils with hearing impairments, reducing glare, enhancing signage for pupils with visual impairments, and making reasonable adjustments for pupils with mobility difficulties.
 - Physiotherapists, who provide guidance on pupils' mobility and physical development, including coordination, movement, and the use of specialist equipment or environmental adaptations.
 - Occupational Therapists, who support schools in using activity-based therapies to promote independence and self-esteem and advise on necessary equipment or adaptations to the school environment.
6. Utilising the Disability Access Fund (DAF) to provide financial support to settings, enabling them to make reasonable adjustments and invest in

resources or adaptations that promote inclusion and remove barriers to participation.

7. Using the Specialist Equipment Protocol to ensure schools can access timely assessments and provision of equipment that enables pupils with SEND to access the physical environment and participate fully in education.

AIM 3: Improving the delivery of information to pupils with special educational needs and/or disability

This will be achieved by:

1. Providing clear, accessible information for children and young people with SEND and their families through Wolverhampton's Local Offer website.
2. Using the SENCO Teams channel and regular bulletins to share best practice and updates with school staff.
3. Promoting the Wolverhampton Information, Advice and Support Service (WIASS) as a confidential and impartial source of guidance for families from birth to age 25.
4. Working in partnership with the Parent Carer Forum to ensure families' voices shape how information is delivered and accessed.
5. Offering schools guidance on communicating effectively with parents, carers, and young people in accessible formats.
6. Maintaining access to specialist support services, including Family First, to ensure children and young people receive high-quality provision that supports their health, care, and educational progress.

Governance

Governance of the Accessibility Strategy will be embedded within the overall SEND and Inclusion governance structure, with oversight provided by the SEND and Inclusion Partnership Board.

The strategy will align with the priority areas of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, and progress will be monitored against the aims and actions through the SEND and Inclusion Improvement Plan Steering Group.

Strategy Review

This strategy will be reviewed and updated at least every three years, or sooner if required, to reflect changes in local SEND priorities, national legislation, and delivery frameworks. The review process will ensure the strategy remains aligned with Wolverhampton's evolving approach to inclusion and accessibility.