



St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Accessibility Plan – Junior School (Nursery – Year 6)

Applicable for three years from March 2024

This policy is the responsibility of the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) committee.

Primary person responsible for this document: *Olivia Buchanan*

Job title: *Head of Juniors*

Secondary person responsible for this document: *Pascale Lavoie (Head of Learning Support / SENDCo)*

Last review date: *March 2024 (updated by C Hald – Interim Head of Juniors)*

Next review date: *March 2027*

Relevant ISI coding (if applicable): *17b*

Approval by Governance Committee: *March 2024*

St Mary's Junior School (SMJS), Cambridge ('the School') strives to be a fully inclusive and welcoming school and therefore aims to ensure that each pupil can participate in all aspects of school life that they choose. The aim of this plan is to set out how the School intends to increase the accessibility of its facilities and activities over the three – year period 2024-2027 as far as is practicable and financially viable.

Aims

The aim of this plan is to set out how St Mary's Junior School intends to increase the accessibility of its activities and facilities for disabled pupils over the three year period 2024 – 2027.

SMJS is committed to providing an inclusive environment. It has high ambitions for all of its pupils and expects them to be able to fully participate in school life as far as possible, with the aim of each individual reaching their full potential.

Roles & Responsibilities

The Governing Body has a statutory responsibility to ensure that this policy is ratified and compliant, as set out in the Independent School Standards 2019 (ISS). The Governing Body delegates this responsibility to the Head, who is accountable for the operationalisation of this policy. In turn, the Bursar is delegated responsibility for the consistent application and implementation of this statutory policy across the School. Staff must follow the expectations set out in this policy.

Duty under the Equality Act

This plan fulfils the requirement for schools to have an accessibility plan for disabled pupils, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The plan seeks to identify and overcome barriers that may prevent pupils with disabilities from accessing what the school has to offer. It focuses on three areas:

- a) Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
- b) Improving the physical environment of the school; and
- c) Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils

In line with the reasonable adjustments duty, the school will take reasonable steps to ensure disabled pupils are not put at a disadvantage compared to other pupils. This covers all aspects of school life, including extra-curricular activities, educational visits and school trips.

In deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, the school will consider:

- Available resources

- The practicalities of making a particular adjustment
- The effect on other pupils
- Health and safety requirements

Definition of Disability and Scope of the Plan

The Accessibility Plan is drawn up in accordance with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. In drawing up our plan we have also had regard to The Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance ‘What equality law means for you as an education provider: schools’. Compliance with the Equality Act is consistent with the School’s aims and ethos, and Equality Policy, Admissions Policy and Special Educational Needs and/or Disability Policy (SEND).

A child or young person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). The School recognises that the term ‘disabled’ may include pupils with health issues, including mental health issues – an area of increasing need post the Covid-19 pandemic - and that their impairment has substantial and long term adverse impact on their ability to carry out normal everyday activities. The School also recognises that ‘disability’ expressly excludes certain conditions, including tendency to set fire, steal, physical or sexual abuse of others, exhibitionism, voyeurism, tattoos and piercings and any addictions.

The duty not to discriminate covers all aspects of school life, including extra - curricular activities, educational visits and school trips. The duty to make reasonable adjustments refers to the full range of policies, procedures and practices of the School. In deciding whether a step is reasonable, schools may take several factors into account including the need to maintain:

- academic standards
- available resources
- the practicalities of making a particular adjustment
- the health and safety of the disabled pupil and the interests of others

This Accessibility Plan includes consideration of how the School proposes to:

- A. *Increase the extent to which pupils with disabilities (including those with special educational needs) can participate in the School’s curriculum.*
- B. *Improve the physical environment of the School for the purposes of increasing the extent to which pupils with disabilities are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and*
- C. *Improve the delivery to pupils with disabilities of information which is readily accessible to pupils without disabilities.*

The School has a SEND Committee whose terms of reference are:

- To review annually the School's policies, procedures, and facilities as they are likely to affect pupils and prospective pupils with disabilities.
- To make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in many aspects to pupils or prospective pupils with disabilities by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future.
- To prepare the School's SEND Policy
- To prepare the School's Accessibility Plan
- To review such plans and policies as necessary and at least on an annual basis.

It can co-opt members whose expertise would be of assistance. The School's SEND committee has considered the following when developing and reviewing the plan:

- Admissions
- Attainment
- Attendance
- Behaviour expectations
- Education
- Exclusions
- Extra-curricular activities
- Food & Diet
- Physical environment
- Selection and recruitment of staff
- Sporting education and activities
- Staff training
- Uniform
- Welfare

The results of the School’s continuous monitoring of the above informs the Accessibility Plan which relates to the following ISI Regulatory Standards on special educational needs and disability:

ISI Regulatory Standard	Description
Schedule 10 3. (2)(a)	Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the School's curriculum;
3. 2(b)	Improving the physical environment of the School for the purposes of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School.
3. 2(c)	Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The School is committed to planning for the provision of an accessible environment, within the context of a selective Catholic independent boarding and day school for girls, which values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their physical, sensory, social and emotional needs. We challenge negative attitudes about accessibility and disability, and endeavour to develop awareness, tolerance, respect and inclusion across the School in relation to these.

The School’s SEND committee meets once per term. It frames recommendations for inclusion in the plan. The document is placed on the agenda for the meeting of the full Governance Committee in the Spring Term. There is a formal review of the implementation of the plan. The SEND committee provides a report at this meeting and identifies which measures have been achieved and where any delay in implementation is foreseen. The plan is then updated with adjusted timeframes where necessary.

The School’s governors are ultimately responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Accessibility Plan during the period to which it relates. This plan will be reviewed annually and a new one drawn up every three years to include provision for the whole school, including Early Years and our boarders.

Welcoming and Preparing for Disabled Pupils

Where it is practicable to make reasonable adjustments to enable prospective pupils to take up a place at the School and to satisfy the current admissions criteria, the School is committed to providing those reasonable adjustments. Where the School agrees to provide additional services, such as academic mentoring, charges may be made at a level that reasonably reflects the cost to the School of providing that service, unless such services are made as reasonable adjustments in accordance with the duty placed on schools by the Equality Act 2010 when such services may be provided as auxiliary aids and services. In order to meet the needs of disabled pupils, the School requires full information. The School will ask all applicants for admission to the School to disclose whether they

have received any academic mentoring, have had an educational psychologist's report or have any disability or other condition of which the School should be aware. In assessing the pupil or prospective pupil, the School may need to take advice and require assessments as appropriate. The School will be sensitive to any issues of confidentiality.

Training

The School ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. The level and frequency of training depends on role of the individual member of staff.

The School maintains written records of all staff training.

Behaviour and Pastoral Care

The School takes pride in its well-developed system of pastoral care for social interaction amongst pupils. The School's objective is to ensure that a disabled pupil, or a pupil with SEN or other protected characteristic, does not suffer less favourable treatment as a result of discrimination. Pupils are taught through the curriculum and other activities the importance of respecting each other and behaving towards each other with courtesy and consideration. The School's behaviour policies and school rules make clear the seriousness of bullying, victimisation and harassment in all its pernicious forms, including racial, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist, gender-related, sexual orientated homophobic, disabled and cyber, in causing serious psychological damage and even suicide. Considerable teacher time is expended in preventing bullying, victimisation and harassment and in dealing with it when it occurs. All pupils understand that the School has a zero tolerance policy on bullying and that bullies can expect strong sanctions to be applied to them. This is included within the Pastoral Care Plan including Anti-Bullying and the Behaviour Discipline Policy.

Relationship with Parents and Complaints Procedures

The School's hope is that all parents will feel able to share any concerns about their child with the pastoral staff in order that a healthy partnership for the care of their child can be developed. The SENCO, other pastoral staff, tutors teaching and medical staff who are involved with their child are always happy to discuss any parental concerns. A member of staff will always ask to see a parent if they felt that an adjustment to the curriculum or individual education plan followed by their child might be in their best interests, or if there was a specific concern.

The School naturally hopes that a parent will not feel that they have cause to complain but its Complaints Policy and Procedure is published on the website for any parent who wishes to use it. Additionally, all parents of children with SEN or disabilities have the legal right to seek redress from the First Tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability) if they believe that their daughter has been discriminated against.

Links to other policies

In conjunction with this policy the following policies should be read:

The SEND Policy

The Health and Safety Policy

Educational Visits' Policy

Curriculum Policies

Equal Opportunities Policy

Anti-bullying Policy

Action Plan

Note, the [Department for Education's guidance on the Equality Act](#) states: "schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every imaginable disability and need only consider general reasonable adjustments e.g. being prepared to produce large font papers for pupils with a visual impairment even though there are no such pupils currently admitted to the school" (paragraph 4.22)

A: Improving access to the curriculum

Overview

The School has a deservedly strong reputation in supporting every pupil to access the curriculum. Pupils are invited to join the School on a reduced curriculum and with personalised timetables in order that they can benefit from the education provided at the School. The Junior School Learning Support Department consists of five core staff members. There is one Junior School SEN Leader, four learning assistants, supported by the Head of Juniors and Senior School Learning Support Department. The school also supports one 1:1 learning assistant designated to a child with a visual impairment and classified as blind. A number of external specialist staff are also utilised to best support the pupils in the school. Teachers continue to have INSET in how best to deal with specific disabilities

from the Head of Juniors and members of the Learning Support Team as well as via external expertise. Learning Support information is accessible to teaching and support staff as relevant via SharePoint and within weekly staff meetings. GDPR rules around data collection, sharing, retention and deletion are followed carefully.

Our teachers and tutors have high expectations of all pupils irrespective of special needs, sensory impairment or disability and they are responsive to pupil diversity. Lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve on an individual basis and in context to their needs. Lessons involve pupils working individually, in pairs, groups and as a whole class. Differentiation including in learning style is used to suit the need of individual pupils. All classes are taught in mixed ability groups, with pupils often being supported on a 1:1 or small group work basis outside of the classroom. Staff recognise and allow for the additional time required by pupils with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Pupils can access in-class support as well as out of class support in small groups. They can also have a reduced number of lessons on their timetable as appropriate, for example, some girls will not participate in an additional language and with parent agreement will benefit from additional English and VR lessons.

Online resources (external and internally produced) are increasingly used. All staff are issued with a device – laptop or tablet as suitable to their individual needs. The School takes great care to ensure appropriate Access Arrangements are in place for all examinations where possible which are designed to assist with specific learning difference/ disability to enable those pupils to achieve according to their ability. These include: additional time or laptop or reader or scribe or a small separate or small group room. Our IT support function is both committed and experienced in this regard.

All pupils are encouraged to take part in music, drama, physical activities, extra-curricular activities, trips, and visits. School performances, sports, trips, and visits are made accessible to all pupils irrespective of attainment or impairment, wherever possible.

Parental satisfaction remains very high as evidenced through the ISI questionnaire from June 22 in which SEND and EAL provision were highly rated. Parents have gifted part/ whole of their original deposits back to the school in gratitude for the work of the Learning Support Department.

Regular reflection and question points:

- Do teachers have the necessary training to teach and support disabled pupils?
- Are classrooms optimally organised for disabled pupils?
- Are lessons responsive to pupil diversity?
- Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups, whole class?
- Do staff recognise and allow for additional time required by some disabled pupils to use equipment in practical work? • Do staff recognise and allow for the mental effort expended by some disabled pupils, e.g. lip reading?
- Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for pupils with disabilities?

- Are there high expectations of all pupils?
- Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?

Curriculum Area	Current situation	Aim/considerations	Time Frame
<p>Increasing flexibility in learning and the extent to which disabled pupils can actively participate in the curriculum</p>	<p>Good practice already embedded in the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Learning Support updates the staff about the needs of the girls on the SEND register regularly – usually during the weekly Stand & Shout Meeting • Each girl has an Individual Support Plan which outlines in brief any reasonable adjustments, accessible language needs, differentiation tools, etc. • We have a SALT who works with the girls who have language and communication difficulties • The staff have had training about many of the difficulties in the four categories of SEND <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning and Cognition (dyslexia and dyspraxia) 2. Interaction and Communication (autism, Speech and Language difficulties) 3. Physical and Sensory (Sensory Processing Disorder) 4. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (Supporting Children’s Mental Health) • All teachers differentiate the work so that the curriculum is accessible to all • Pupils in Y3-Y6 have access to the online support tools, IDL for Maths and Emile for Spelling, and are given additional support lessons outside of their classroom with a member of the LS Team 	<p>Short term objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the allocation and structure of support throughout SMJS and embed the new SENDCo to best support the team • To make sure that the SEND register is shared with new staff and that the Individual Support Plans are explained to them • Training for staff on auditory processing (there are an increasing number of girls who show signs of such difficulties) • Training for staff on sensory difficulties and what it means to be on the autistic spectrum – particularly for girls • Effective differentiation as a focus for training and observations by the SLT • Increase the number of devices available for usage across the school • Training for staff on supporting girls with visual stress <p>Medium term objectives</p>	<p>Ongoing – from Summer 24</p> <p>Initiated Summer 24</p> <p>Ongoing review</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils in Pre-Prep who require extra phonics support access the Little Wandle resource with their teacher/support and at home with parents • Learning Support assistants are used throughout the school to support girls who find the curriculum difficult to access • We provide access to all school exams for those whose reading and writing speed is well below the national average by providing an adult as reader, prompt and scribe • School trips are planned, and reasonable adjustments made in discussion with the parents, so that all girls can take part • All girls are included in sporting activities whatever their skills • We have a data diamond tracking system in place so that any girl who is not successfully accessing the curriculum is identified and monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisit training on the dyslexia friendly classroom for new staff • Review the curriculum to make it more interactive and multi-sensory • Engage with an OT to support pupils with physical and coordination difficulties <p>Long term objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to update training for the staff in four different categories of need (Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Physical and Sensory, Social Emotional and Mental Health). • To continue to update training in how to support EAL students 	
<p>Increase focus on providing support for wellbeing and mental health</p>	<p>Head of Wellbeing established as an Additional Responsibility for one member of the SMJS staff team. A thorough and detailed JD has been created.</p>	<p>Establish a Wellbeing Policy to provide targeted, proactive and preventative strategies, to help build resilience and emotional wellbeing and provide therapeutic activity.</p> <p>Embed reflection within the Prep School by creating greater awareness, providing further training for staff and integrating mindfulness within daily school life.</p>	<p>Policies for pupils and staff in place from Jan 25</p> <p>Sensory Circuits will be introduced Spring 2025</p>

<p>Increase opportunities for pupil and parent feedback</p>	<p>Termly reviews and updates provided to parents of pupils receiving support or with additional needs. Sent electronically. Parents invited to respond.</p> <p>Open Door Policy meaning parents can request meetings at any time.</p>	<p>Put in place feedback meetings for pupils, and parents of pupils, receiving SEN support to increase opportunities for pupil and parent voice with regards to accessibility and SEND support.</p> <p>SEN teachers to attend parents' evenings and meetings available on an ad hoc basis.</p>	<p>From Sept 24</p> <p>Head of Learning Support to attend Pupil Progress meetings</p>
--	--	--	---

B: Improving access to the physical environment

Overview

The School is situated within a conservation zone. Teaching facilities are split over two key buildings within the site. Acton House is set over multiple floors (four), whilst The Coach House is mainly on the ground floor, with an additional Art Studio upstairs. Acton House is the main site for teaching Y2-Y6 and houses spaces such as the main school library, dining hall, and school offices. However, all spaces are multi-use and adaptable and the allocation of such spaces are reviewed each year to support the pupils and their access needs. All buildings have accessible toilets although much of Acton House is accessed via stairs only. Disabled parking is available on site.

An additional, comprehensive review and assessment of the school facilities was undertaken with the admission of a visually impaired child. The site has been adapted to meet her requirements now and, in the future, with a further review being taken annually to ensure all needs are met. The school liaises actively with her parents, individual support teacher, class teacher, outside agencies and Cambridgeshire Council to ensure we are compliant and doing everything we can to facilitate her learning, access and progress.

Staff who have needs identified via Occupational Health referrals have been provided with furniture including desks at specific heights, special chairs, particular IT equipment to support visual impairment including larger screens and voice-activated software, or air flow systems. Adjustments to timetables, working hours and flexibility to attend appointments are also provided. When pupils and/or staff are unable to access a first or second floor, all reasonable efforts are made to relocate lessons to more accessible places.

Regular reflection and question points:

- Does the size and layout of areas, including all academic and social facilities; classrooms, halls, library and specialist teaching rooms – allow access for all pupils?
- Can pupils who use wheelchairs move around the School without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, and lavatory facilities?
- Are pathways of travel around the School site and parking arrangements safe, routes logical and well signed?
- Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform all pupils, including pupils with SEN and disability; including alarms with both visual and auditory components?
- Are non-visual guides used, to assist people to use buildings?
- Could any of the décor or signage be considered to be confusing or disorientating for disabled students with visual impairment, autism or epilepsy?
- Are areas to which pupils should have access well lit?
- Are steps made to reduce background noise for hearing impaired pupils such as considering a room's acoustics
- Is furniture and equipment selected, adjusted and located appropriately?

SMJS	Current situation	Aim/Next Steps	Time Frame
Old building (Acton House)	There can be difficulties in maintaining suitable temperatures for a pleasant work and education environment.	New eco-boilers to be installed as part of an ongoing replacement cycle Window replacement (including double glazing) as part of ongoing classroom refurbishment and maintenance cycle	From Summer 25; this will need to be reviewed given the extensive work carried out on the roof and building over Summer 24
Improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which pupils can take advantage of what is on offer	The Coach House is a purpose build school taking into account wheelchair access, ease of navigation around the site, free flow access to an outdoor space, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and	To improve the outdoor area for more productive and safe access and use for children aged 3+	Continue to review; cost implications Review

SMJS	Current situation	Aim/Next Steps	Time Frame
	washing facilities, flexible layouts in all classrooms	<p>To update the toilet facilities for pupils to make access easier for children aged 3+</p> <p>Consider lighting options to provide more natural and less stressful light</p> <p>Consider air conditioning or air ventilation units to support pupils attention and concentration as well as appropriate working conditions in summer</p>	
Emergency evacuation procedures for pupils and staff with a disability	Evacuation from all floors above ground floor in the Coach House necessitates PEEP's and/or specialist equipment	Ensure Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are in place for all pupils and staff with a known disability or need. Evacu-chair on top floor	Ongoing review
Signage including room numbering	Some rooms are currently named but they are not numbered.	New signage including on the floors with room numbering to make ease of location better	Plan to be agreed for implementation in Summer 2025
Furniture & Classroom Layouts	<p>Very dated, bulky and traditional classroom furniture making movement and change difficult. Pupils offered basic seats, with backs, in a range of sizes</p> <p>Any furniture specifically needed for a pupil will be acquired; layout of room adjusted as per assessment</p>	Consider the use of more flexible furniture options which allow for better positioning support, the ability to move it around, as well as specific furniture to support pupils with additional needs, e.g. wobble stools	Ongoing review; cost implication
Outdoor Play Spaces	<p>There are a range of outdoor play areas available to pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coach House has free flow access to a large outdoor area • Paved playground 	Review the use of outdoor spaces and update to make them safer and more readily available for children of all age groups and needs:	Ongoing review; introduction of new Outdoor Learning Leader with scheme of work

SMJS	Current situation	Aim/Next Steps	Time Frame
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enclosed netball courts Lawn Woodland Area Flat and easily accessible with alterations being made to ensure clear visibility, e.g painting outlines and surfaces, changes textures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and rebuild the woodland area and stage Better outdoor lighting in and around netball courts for afterschool clubs and evening activities, particularly in winter 	Cost implication

C: Improving access to information

Overview

The major shift post covid, has been enhanced IT infrastructure to promote flexible work practices, including ability to work from multiple sites as well as from home and other locations. Enhanced security measures including MFA have been implemented to facilitate this ready access.

Pupils continue to use differing font sizes and other accessible formats, colour overlays, tinted glasses to support visual impairments. Readers and other adjustments are routinely made.

Our website continues to be developed including virtual tours of all aspects of the school site and films by relevant staff on all aspects of the academic, pastoral and extra-curricular aspects of school life, including SEND and EAL provision. The school office is permanently staffed to deal with pupil, staff and parent queries and emergencies.

All admissions forms have been made available in electronic format online. International students or those living abroad are regularly virtually-interviewed. The Admissions team seeks advice from Head of Learning Support if needed.

Our parent portal and website allow easy access to School information for current and prospective parents. Online events continue to be developed for the benefit of current and prospective, local, and international parents including online parents' evenings, by parent vote, reviewed annually.

Information	Current situation	Aim/Next Steps	Time Frame
-------------	-------------------	----------------	------------

<p>Improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils</p>	<p>Good practice already embedded in the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff use power point presentations – with visual aids (pictures, diagrams and video clips) to communicate the content of the lessons • Written information for pupils is laid out in clear and legible font with double spacing • Hand-outs are increased in size for girls who need it and printed on different colours of paper 	<p>Short term objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To revisit training on how to present text to the girls to make it accessible, and the different ways that girls can record their work • To increase the number of devices available to pupils such as surface go's <p>Medium term objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce Firefly as an effective way of communicating homework and lesson resources to pupils and their parents • Update the technology available in school • To increase the number of girls who learn to touch type in the touch typing clubs <p>Long term objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the technology available in school to complement teaching • Embed Firefly as an on and off-site learning tool 	<p>From Sept 24</p> <p>Ongoing review from Summer 24</p>
---	--	---	--