



Accessibility Policy – Senior School and Boarding

This policy is the responsibility of the Assistant Head Enrichment and Partnerships via the SEND Committee.

Last review: January 24

Approved by Governance Committee: January 24

Next review: January 27

Accessibility Policy

Seeking Justice is one of the five core values of St Mary's School whilst Empathy (one of the School's five HEART habits) includes a commitment to celebrating diversity. St Mary's School therefore seeks to be a fully inclusive and welcoming school and aims to ensure that each member of the School community can participate in and excel at all aspects of school life.

The School aims to ensure the highest standards of teaching and learning for every student. As a High-Performance Learning school, we have very high expectations and strive to ensure that every student can participate in, and benefit from core and wider curriculum opportunities whilst developing greater independence skills.

The School fully recognises its legal duty to make its products and services, including but not limited to, its premises and provision of information as accessible as possible to students, staff, users, visitors and the wider school community.

The School has regard to the following in respect of this policy:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance 'What equality law means for you as an education provider: schools'.
- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND code of Practice 2015

This policy should be read in conjunction with related policies including the School's Equality Policy, Admissions Policy, Anti- Bullying Policy, EAL Policy and SEND Policy.

As defined by the Equality Act 2010 the School recognises that a 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'. The School recognises that the term 'disabled' may include pupils with Special Educational Needs and health issues, including mental health issues. The School recognises that 'disability' expressly excludes tendency to set fire, steal, physical or sexual abuse of others, exhibitionism, voyeurism, tattoos and piercings and any addictions.

The School will promote understanding of disability and work to show positive models of people who are less able. We will avoid stereotypes and use language which emphasises ability rather than deficit.

Beyond disability, the School seeks to address possible admission and participation barriers to school life by anyone working in their second language, as well as those from all faith traditions and cultures. We celebrate diversity and value the varied contributions of everyone to our living community.

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, the School takes several factors into account including the need to maintain:

- academic standards
- available resources including time
- the practicalities of making a particular adjustment
- the health and safety of the pupil experiencing the disability and the interests of others who may also be less able

The School's 3-year Accessibility Plan includes consideration of how the School proposes to:

- A. Increase the extent to which less able pupils (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 less able pupils can take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School; and*
- C. Improve the universal delivery of information which is readily accessible to pupils without disabilities.*

The School has considered the following when developing and reviewing the plan:

- Admissions
- Attainment
- Attendance
- Behaviour expectations
- Education
- Exclusions
- Extra-curricular activities
- Food
- Physical environment
- Selection and recruitment of staff

- Sporting education and activities
- Staff training
- Uniform
- Welfare

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 providing equity of opportunity and accessibility to all in its community by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future.
- To prepare the School's SEND Policy
- To approve the School's Accessibility Plan
- To review such plans and policies as necessary and at least on an annual basis.

The School's SEND committee meets once per term. It frames recommendations for inclusion in the Accessibility Plan. The SEND committee can co-opt members whose expertise would be of assistance. The Accessibility Plan is placed on the agenda for the meeting of the full Governance Committee in the Spring Term each year. 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.

Permanent members of the SEND Committee are: Head teacher, Head of Learning Support, Assistant Head Enrichment and Partnerships, Deputy Head Operations and Data, Head of Juniors, Junior School SENDCO. Other staff and students can be coopted to the committee as necessary.

Accessibility Plan 2024-27 (Senior School and Boarding)

The aim of this plan is to set out how the School intends to ensure equity of opportunity and access to its facilities and activities over the three – year period 2024-2027 as far as is reasonably practicable according to its values and legal duty.

A: Providing equity in the curriculum

Overview

- The Senior School Learning Support Department directly and indirectly supports less able and neurodiverse pupils to access the curriculum, and supports staff with information, advice and guidance in lesson and delivery adaptations respectively. Pupils with recognised learning needs can access in-class support as well as out of class support in small groups.
- The pastoral Team of tutors, Heads of Year, Nurses, counsellors and wellbeing coordinators support the mental wellbeing of pupils so that they can maximise benefit from the curriculum.

- Some 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.
- All teachers continue receive training on how best to deal with specific disabilities from the Head of Learning Support and external expertise.
- GDPR compliant Learning Support information is accessible to teaching and support staff as relevant.
- Our High-Performance Learning (HPL) philosophy means that teachers and tutors have high expectations of all pupils irrespective of special educational needs, sensory impairment, difficulty or disability and they are responsive to pupil diversity. Lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to participate and achieve.
- Setting is used to support learning where appropriate.
- Extra sets of textbooks are provided for those with a physical disability to retain at home or online textbooks are provided conducive to the pupil's normal way of working which may be externally and/or internally produced.
- All pupils in years 7-11 are provided with a suitable digital device with appropriate software to meet their needs.
- Sixth Form students have flexibility to BYOD. All staff are issued with a device – laptop or tablet as suitable to their individual needs.
- Our librarian oversees facilities in our Learning Resources Centre and is adept in supporting those with SEND requirements. This has included purchase of digital technology for oral access to literature.
- 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 wherever possible.
- A comprehensive careers and future skills programme ensures an inclusive approach to guidance by exposing students to a wide variety of opportunities whilst offering bespoke work experience placements.
- The School ensures appropriate JCQ Access Arrangements are in place for public examinations – GCSEs and A Levels – which are designed to assist those with specific learning difference or disability to achieve according to their ability. These include additional time or laptop or reader or scribe or a small separate or small group room. We also have access to 'Text to Speech' (Read and Write). Additional software, including larger fonts and other accessible formats are also available as are reading pens for use in class and in examinations. The Head, in her capacity as Head of Centre, signs off access arrangements for all students with SEND or medical requirements ahead of the summer examination season to ensure that we can support provision appropriately.
- Parents and Sixth Form pupils are made aware of the process they need to follow if they wish to apply for the DSA allowance at Parents' Evenings. Relevant staff liaise with universities if an individualised Care plan is implemented at St Mary's, Cambridge.

Forward Plan

Area related Curriculum Access	Current situation	Aim/considerations	Time Frame
Increasing flexibility in learning	Classroom furniture & technology inhibits flexible pedagogy	To access HPL via flexing the environment to suit learning need including wireless devices so teachers can freely roam	Ongoing – from summer 24
New and refurbished classrooms	New classrooms in the Mary Ward Suite and classrooms are updated on a planned rolling basis	To ensure that design of each classroom is an inclusive learning environment as possible	Ongoing
Oracy	We are in the 2nd year of a whole school focus on Oracy Training on engaging students to learn through Talk was given to all Senior School teachers in January 2024	To ensure that all students can access higher levels of attainment this is especially beneficial for students with processing needs.	Ongoing
HPL	We continue our commitment to HPL which states that all students can achieve high performance irrespective of current attainment.	To ensure that all students have access to and understand HPL ways to think and to behave and that this is further embedded by the School's HEART values to ensure increased access for all	Ongoing
Extra Curricular	Ongoing improvement of extra-curricular offering and commitment to monitoring and analysing student attendance.	To ensure that there are no barriers to accessing extra-curricular opportunities for individuals or groups	Ongoing
PSHE	A new PHSE SOW is now delivered by tutors	Students are able to learn and to discuss issues that matter to them in a low stakes environment.	Ongoing
Learning Support	Challenged by learning space/capacity	Provide greater flexibility within existing spaces to increase capacity and the range/intensity of participation in learning activities for less able pupils, e.g. remodeling top floor of Paston, providing magnetic and write-on wall space in Room 16, removing shelving to provide more seating space in Room 16.	September 2024
Mental Health and Wellbeing Provision including Outdoor Learning.	The school has invested in wellbeing coordinators and a Head of outdoor learning	To ensure that barriers to learning and participation caused by poor mental health are removed	Ongoing

--	--	--	--

B: Providing equity of access to the physical environment

Overview

The school regularly reviews the physical environment so that reasonable steps can be taken to develop accessibility.

- All Bateman Street buildings have wheelchair access at ground level. 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.
- There are accessible toilets on ground floor level in all School buildings.
- Rooms are fitted with baffles eg the new dining area as appropriate to enhance neurodiverse experiences.
- Wellbeing is considered as part of all development eg biophilic classrooms and sensory garden.
- Staff who have needs identified via Occupational Health referrals have been provided with specialist furniture or IT equipment/software according to need.
- The historic nature of the school site, which is situated within a conservation zone, means that there are areas of the school which are less accessible to those with mobility issues.

Forward Plan

Bateman Street buildings	Current situation	Solution	Time Frame
Old buildings	Not all parts of historic buildings are accessible to those with mobility issues Not all classrooms are optimal for neurodiverse students	Ongoing classroom refurbishment and maintenance cycle considers a range of user needs	Ongoing – the aim is 4 classrooms a year
Signage including room numbering	Needs clarification for all users Accessible routes are not currently signposted	New signage including consideration of braille/ embossed signage including on the floor which will better support differing visual needs	Plan to be agreed for implementation in Sept 24
Site Plan	Site plan does not currently show accessible areas for less able visitors.	Creation of a site plan which highlights accessibility.	Plan to be agreed for implementation in Sept 24
Biophilic Areas	Sixth Form classroom has been set up as a biophilic learning environment to benefit mental health	Further biophilic environments where possible to support wellbeing	Summer Term 2024
Historic Site	Because the site has been developed over time there a	Audit the environment to update where possible and/ or mitigate	Summer Term 2024

	variety of surfaces on outside premises	any suboptimal areas with signage	
--	---	-----------------------------------	--

C: Universal access to information

Overview

The school seeks where possible to ensure the widest possible access to information for anyone working in their second language, with special needs or processing difficulties and/or disabilities including visual impairment. The School also seeks to be inclusive to all faith traditions and cultures.

- Reception is permanently staffed to deal with pupil, staff and parent queries and emergencies.
- Our website is regularly reviewed for its accessibility
- Our parent portal and website allow easy access to School information for current and prospective parents.
- All admissions forms have been made available in electronic format online. International students or those living abroad are regularly interviewed online. The Admissions team seeks advice from Head of Learning Support if needed.
- The School holds online open events for prospective international parents.
- Parents evenings are held online to maximise access including for international parents although we recognise that this might represent poor access for those with sensory impairments.
- The School makes use of translators as necessary and where possible to communicate with parents and prospective families.
- Pupils use differing font sizes and styles and other accessible formats, colour overlays, tinted glasses to support visual impairments or processing issues. Modified language scripts published by Examination Boards are available in public examinations for students with low reading comprehension. Readers and other adjustments are routinely made.
- All students and staff have their own device and software is made available to support students and staff in accessing written text.
- The school promotes flexible work practices, including ability to work from multiple sites as well as from home and other locations.

Forward Plan

Information/ Media	Current situation	Aim/considerations	Time Frame
Curriculum Info	Teachers have limited knowledge on digital learning tools.	Training for teachers in use of student digital learning tools to minimise barriers to accessing curriculum information	2024-25
Info for EAL parents/stakeholders	Available in translation on request	To provide more information in languages other than English	From Summer Term 2024

Admissions info for prospective parents	All written information is in English	To provide key admissions documents in a range of languages and formats	From Summer Term 2024
Accessibility to website in terms of font type and size	Website format is due for review	To ensure that the website is consistent with best practice in terms of consideration of font type and size and visual layout for those with visual and processing needs	From Summer Term 2024
Applicant pack for vacancies	Explicit accessibility and diversity information is not prioritised	Ensure diversity information and our inclusive approach is clear to all applicants.	By March 2024
Large Screens	Large screens are update on a rolling basis. Not all eg Hall B are of highest quality resolution	To ensure that all screens are optimal for users with visual impairment	Ongoing