

# **Education Accessibility Strategy 2025-28**

# Background

## **Duty to have a written accessibility strategy**

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (the “Act”) places a duty on the local authority to prepare a written accessibility strategy relating to the schools it is responsible for (community, foundation, Voluntary Aided and voluntary controlled schools). It also places a duty on responsible bodies of schools (i.e. governing bodies and trusts) to prepare a written accessibility plan.

The Act stipulates that the purpose of an accessibility strategy is to:

1. increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools’ curriculums;
2. improve the physical environment of the schools to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can make best use of the opportunities available at the schools; and
3. improve delivery of accessible information to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The delivery of accessible information under (3) must be:

- a. within a reasonable time; and
- b. in ways which are determined after taking account of the pupils’ disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

Individual schools’ accessibility plans should also be designed to further these three objectives and should take account of the disabilities of the pupils attending the school and the preferences expressed by them and their parents. Both strategies and plans should be kept under review and, if necessary, revised, and the local authority or school must consider the need to allocate adequate resources for their implementation.

The Act defines a disabled pupil as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. A physical or mental impairment includes learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions and hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism and speech, language and communication impairments.

Many children and young people who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) may have a disability under the Act. However, it does not necessarily mean that a pupil who has a disability also has SEN, although there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

## **Kent’s Vision**

Our driving ambition is to deliver the best outcomes we can for all children, young people and their families. We constantly aim for Kent to be the most forward-looking

area in England for care, education and learning, supported by specialist and early help services so that we are the best place for children and young people to grow up safely, learn, develop and achieve.

Our aim is for Kent to be a place where families thrive and all children learn and develop well from the earliest years so that they are ready to succeed at school, have excellent foundations for learning and are equipped well for achievement in life, no matter what their background.

We want all children and young people to be engaged with and included in the provision of high-quality inclusive education in their local community, ensuring that, whatever their circumstance or ability, they have a sense of belonging, feel respected, are valued for who they are and develop the knowledge and skills required for adult life.

### **How does this Accessibility Strategy fit in?**

This vision is for all children. However, achieving it requires a particular focus on those children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

That focus is provided by Kent's overarching Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2021-24, which can be found at: [Kent's Strategy for Children and Young People](#). We will review this document once the SEND Strategy for 2025-2028 has been adopted and consider whether any changes are necessary. There is a consultation on the draft SEND Strategy for 2025-2028 running until 10 November 2024 at [www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategyconsultation).

This Education Accessibility Strategy supports the delivery of Kent's SEND Strategy, and our Countywide Approach To Inclusive Education (CATIE): [A Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education \(kelsi.org.uk\)](#). It also supports, and is supported by, the Commissioning Plan for Education provision in Kent which is updated annually and can be viewed on the KCC website. The latest version can be found at: [Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-2028](#).

To achieve this vision, we and all schools in Kent, need to develop and improve access to the curriculum, the school environment and the presentation of information for SEND pupils. As the needs of our community change, so we reconsider each of these aspects. This Strategy sets out how the County Council is supporting and delivering improved access for SEND pupils.

# Accessibility Strategy

In general, accessibility is about making sure a person is not excluded from something because of their disability. It is about removing barriers so that someone with a disability can do what they need to, in a similar amount of time and effort as someone who does not have a disability.

This strategy sets out how the local authority (Kent County Council) and its maintained schools currently ensure education is accessible for pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), and what steps will be taken to further improve accessibility in the three areas:

1. increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums;
2. improving the physical environment of the schools so that disabled pupils are able to take increased advantage of educational benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the schools; and
3. improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Removing barriers empowers people with disabilities and helps them to be as independent as possible.

Many aspects of this strategy apply equally to academies and free schools, for example, access to certain local authority services and the expectations on schools. Whilst legally the local authority is not responsible for these schools, we work closely with them and their trusts to ensure that the needs of all pupils are supported.

## **1. Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculums.**

### **How we ensure access to the curriculum**

We aim to ensure that no pupil is disadvantaged, through SEN or disability, in terms of access or entitlement to a full curriculum, within the National Curriculum Framework, which is ambitious and will give all learners the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

Curriculum access should initially be seen at a 'whole school' level, the rationale being that many barriers of access to the curriculum will be similar for many groups of pupils and therefore a strategic approach should be adopted to removing those barriers. Paragraph 1.1. below details the further support provided by the local authority to schools to improve curriculum access for SEND pupils.

The term 'curriculum' covers not only teaching and learning but also the wider curriculum of the school, such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities.

#### 1.1 The local authority currently:

- commissions a range of SEN support services for all mainstream schools (including academies and free schools) to advise on strategies to adapt their curriculum and environment to support pupils with SEND, including those with sensory impairments or who are neurodivergent;
- encourages schools to work together to share good practice, particularly via a cluster-based approach, including peer to peer reviews;
- provides advice regarding specialist furniture via the Physical Disability/ Sensory Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (PD&S STLS)<sup>1</sup>;
- provides advice, strategies and specialist equipment regarding complex communication difficulties and complex access to the curriculum for children and young people across Kent and Medway via Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology (KM CAT) Team<sup>2</sup>;
- enables all schools to apply for High Needs Funding for eligible pupils with or without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), to ensure that they have the resources needed to enable individual learners to access the full curriculum. In the early years, our Special Education Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) is available to providers;
- commissions Local Inclusion Forum Teams (LIFT) - multi disciplinary groups, including school SENCOs, to provide solution-focused advice to schools about individual pupils or groups of pupils. LIFT is the gateway for accessing specialist support, such as specialist teachers and educational psychologists<sup>3</sup>;
- has Mainstream Core Standards, a framework for schools to support pupils with SEND. These set out the expectations on all schools, particularly for the delivery of quality first teaching, and the provision of high quality adapted teaching;
- has a dedicated Equality and Inclusion resource<sup>4</sup> to support best practice in Kent schools, which is a one-stop reference point for great inclusive practice guidance;

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<sup>1</sup> Referrals to the PD&S STLS is via their webpage [Physical Disability and Complex Medical Needs - KELS!](#)

<sup>2</sup> Communication and Assistive Technology referral are made to the Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Team. The referral form can be accessed here: [Make a referral to Kent CAT - KELS!](#)

<sup>3</sup> Sensory support, including vision and hearing impairments, can be accessed in the first instance via emailing the team at [hivimsi@kent.gov.uk](mailto:hivimsi@kent.gov.uk). As with the PD service, the Sensory Service will receive referrals from education establishments, parents or health professionals.

<sup>4</sup> [Equality and Inclusion - KELS!](#)

- provides access for all Kent education settings to the Autism Education Trust's training and frameworks;
- provides access for a minimum of 300 mainstream primary and secondary schools to Nurture UK training and support;
- has SEN Inclusion Advisers for each district who support and challenge schools on the provision made for individual pupils; and
- adjusts the access arrangements to the Kent Test process to meet the needs of disabled children and ensure fair access to selective schools.

## 1.2 All schools currently:

- construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all learners, particularly the most disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life;
- provide a curriculum which is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment;
- teach as full a range of subjects for as long as possible, 'specialising' only when necessary;
- have in place a School Accessibility Plan that will demonstrate its commitment to promote Disability Equality and to ensure that this commitment is reflected in development planning;
- must "use their best endeavours" to provide "high quality teaching" which should "meet the needs of all children and young people"<sup>5</sup>;
- are required to make reasonable adjustments<sup>6</sup> subject to the Reasonable Adjustment Duty. This may include, but is not limited to, the provision of auxiliary aids for disabled pupils, worksheets in a larger font or on different coloured paper, extra adult support, rest breaks, allowing additional time to complete tasks;
- seek professional advice and in-service training on issues relating to the delivery of an accessible curriculum;
- include curriculum planning and accessibility within the school development plan and report annually (Governors Report to Parents) on the developments in this plan on disability access issues; and
- link with specialist advisory services that can offer advice and support to the school.

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<sup>5</sup> SEN Code of Practice 1.24

<sup>6</sup> Further information can be found in the SEND Mainstream Core Standards document: [Special educational needs mainstream core standards \(kelsi.org.uk\)](https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-educational-needs-mainstream-core-standards)

### 1.3 How we are further improving access to the curriculum

The County Approach to Inclusive Education (CATIE) is our adopted strategy to drive the transformational change needed in Kent to enable all children and young people with SEND to thrive in mainstream school settings. Our Priorities are:

#### **Priority One: Supporting a school led system to deliver the highest quality core inclusive education.**

This priority focuses on building capacity within settings through three parts: the development of a core training offer, leadership development programmes, and peer-to-peer review structures across the county.

This priority will ensure schools have the skills, confidence and culture to support all children and young people with SEND and provide them with equitable access to a challenging and wide-ranging curriculum.

#### **Priority Two: Providing additional intervention and support with engagement and integration.**

This priority explores the best ways to facilitate access to additional inclusion support for children and young people with SEND. This includes locality structures and forums, as well as opportunities to strengthen local resources and pilot opportunities.

This priority is focused on ensuring the resources available in the system have the maximum impact on supporting children and young people with SEND to progress well in mainstream schools, by having the right support to access a curriculum.

#### **Priority Three: Inclusive Education is part of a broader, holistic, and joined-up offer of support.**

Education support for inclusion is linked to the broader system of services and support available to children, young people, and families in Kent. This will involve working in partnership with a range of agencies as part of the implementation of the wider SEND strategy.

This priority recognises that the support children and young people with SEND need to fully access the opportunities in mainstream schools and their curriculums is not limited to school staff; it requires professionals from other services to play their parts. By better supporting the holistic needs of these children and young people, they are best placed to do well in school.

#### **Priority Four: Ensuring smooth transition between education phases**

This priority aims to develop collaborative approaches between settings to achieve successful and sustained transitions for children and young people at key phases and times of transition in their lives.

This priority will ensure that there is support in place for children and young people with SEND and each point of transition.

All schools, including academies and free schools, have contributed to the £20m fund which supports the delivery of the County Approach to Inclusive Education.

The Government has announced support from wraparound childcare, to support working families access to before and after school provision for primary aged pupils. This provision will be available to disabled children too, as part of the wider curriculums of their schools.

KCC has adopted a locality model to secure service improvement. The model aims to enable SEN support and services to be accessed more easily and delivered in a new way. The locality model will help pupils to thrive at school, be valued, visible, and feel included in their local communities. It seeks to build on peer to peer support and moderation; align health and education partners; place resources and decision making in the hands of localities to enable efficient, effective, timely and consistent decisions to be made that will better support all schools to have the right people, training, skills and resources at the right time to make the curriculum accessible to children and young people with SEND.

Additionally, we are developing an education application of The Future Planning Tool, to support curriculum planning, particularly in Post 16. This will ensure that the curriculum available, meets the aspirations of young people with SEND, improving access to, and participation in, Post 16 provision.

## **2. Improving the physical environment of the school so disabled pupils can make best use of the opportunities available at the school.**

### **How we are improving the physical environment of schools**

The local authority is committed to developing the range of provision available in localities across the County. We recognise that investment in buildings and outside areas supports improved access to a full curriculum for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The aim is to ensure that the physical environment of schools will be improved to ensure that accessibility is not a barrier to learning and other opportunities for pupils with SEND.

An aim is for as many maintained schools as possible to have a range of features to meet the core special needs most often associated with physical difficulties (access ramps, toilets and personal care facilities, and access to all key curriculum areas). It is recognised that some school buildings simply cannot be made as accessible as we would like.

Improvements to physical access include a wide variety of adaptations ranging from the quite simple to more complex refurbishments and alterations. Improvements can sometimes be achieved by, for example, re-arranging room space, removing obstructions from walkways, changing the layout of classrooms or re-allocating rooms to particular subject specialism or improving the acoustic and visual environment. Much of this can be delivered by schools themselves while discharging



their responsibilities. However, schools are not obliged to anticipate and make adjustments for every disability and need only to make reasonable adjustments. The physical needs of some pupils (including those with sensory impairments) are very specific and may require specific further adaptations. The local authority can assist maintained, community, voluntary controlled and foundation schools with these through the provision of capital grants using the School Access Initiative capital budget.

The planning duty under this heading includes improvements to the physical environment of a school and the provision of physical aids to education. Physical aids to education would include specialist furniture or equipment, Information and Communication Technology equipment or mobility aids.

## 2.1 The local authority:

- is undertaking accessibility audits for all maintained schools (community, foundation and voluntary controlled schools). The outputs of these are informing schools' accessibility plans and the authority's capital programme;
- is reviewing on an on-going basis, through the Education Asset Board, physical access and suitability audits of all maintained schools;
- has a School Access Initiative capital budget which funds larger capital projects in maintained community, voluntary controlled and foundation schools which are required to either enable an individual child's needs to be met at a particular school, or as part of our wider programme of improving access to schools in localities;
- is ensuring that any new school buildings take account of the needs of children and young people with disabilities and, where appropriate, staff and other members of the school community and other site users;
- is ensuring that any building works comply with Building Regulations, including Part M<sup>7</sup>;
- is providing advice to schools via:
  - The Local Inclusion Form Team (LIFT)
  - The Education Psychology Service
  - Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS)
  - Physical Disability and Sensory Specialist Teaching and Learning Service
  - Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service (KM CAT)

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<sup>7</sup> Building Regulations Part M in the UK focuses on ensuring that buildings are accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities. [It sets out requirements for the design and construction of buildings to make them accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.](#)

- Resources on the Kent County Council (KCC) website including specific information around Autism and other neurodivergent differences. <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs/special-educational-needs/autism-education-trust-aet>
- Autism Education Trust (AET) autism training is available for education settings from Early Years to Post 16
- is providing specialist aids/equipment to meet the needs of individuals in liaison with the Local Health Board; and,
- is maintaining up to date information about the number of children and young people with disabilities of different types through the Council's existing information gathering systems.

## 2.2 Schools are:

- using devolved budgets, including devolved capital, to ensure that their responsibilities are met, as far as is reasonably possible;
- ensuring that any new building works planned meet the needs of pupils with disabilities and conform to building regulations;
- on a planned, strategic basis, continuing to progressively embed good practice within the school developing the inclusive ethos;
- providing specialist aids/equipment and make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of the individuals;
- accessing training and advice for governors, teaching staff and non-teaching staff;
- continuing to maintain up to date information about the number of pupils with disabilities in the school;
- anticipating the types of issues / barriers that could arise; and,
- reviewing school organisation and accommodation usage to maximise accessibility and opportunities.

## 2.3 **What we are doing to further improve the physical environment of schools to support disabled pupils.**

The local authority is:

- drawing together information from the commissioned accessibility audits to identify and use available capital funding to fill geographical gaps in provision strategically and ensure all localities have a range of accessible schools to meet differing need;
- working to improve the accessibility information available to parents/carers when applying for a school place so they can make informed choices, as this will better support access to the curriculum and to physical access to premises;

- developing an education application of the Future Planning Tool which has the potential to support effective accessibility planning, taking data several years in advance to prepare for the upcoming cohorts' accessibility needs;
- investing in Specialist Resource Provisions in mainstream schools, particularly for secondary schools, to ensure pupils have appropriate pathways to suitable learning environments;
- looking at the business case for investing in mainstream school buildings to provide intervention spaces, such as sensory spaces; and
- working with the Integrated Care Board to improve access to Occupational Therapist advice and assessments relating to the equipment and personalised moving and handling plans needed in schools to support individual pupils.

### **3. Delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.**

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a local authority Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible. Kent's SEND Local Offer, the SEND Information Hub is available at: [Special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) - Kent County Council](#). For those families who are not able to access the internet, access to the Local Offer is being made available through schools and community venues such as Libraries and Family Hubs.

#### **3.1 The local authority:**

- is enabling digital access to information in formats compatible with different devices;
- is making sure information is available in alternative versions, including braille or a language other than English;
- will provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter for meetings if required;
- is striving to ensure the language used is accessible to all, and if by necessity information cannot be simplified, that easy read versions are available;
- will provide access to information for and through a range of professionals, for example youth workers, who can support disabled young people and those educated outside of school to access information in different ways and in different environments;
- will provide places in communities where individuals and families can access information, for example gateways and family hubs; and,
- will raise the profile of information which helps parents advocate for their children, for example parent training on the mainstream core standards.

Specifically for pupils in maintained schools, the local authority:

- will provide access when required to information in Braille and large print formats for children and young people via Visual Impairment (VI) Specialist Teaching and Learning service;
- will provide children and young people with access when required to British Sign Language (BSL) support for school information and communication via the Hearing Impaired Service;
- will support schools by making advice available from the specialist teachers for vision impairments, hearing impairments and physical difficulties;
- will provide access to specialist ICT communications equipment for individual students with specific needs; and
- will fund Information, Advice and Support Kent (IASK) which offers impartial information, advice and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) encouraging and developing partnerships between children, young people, parents, schools, the local authority and other partners.

3.2 Schools are:

- meeting their duty to provide information in accessible forms to students who may have difficulty reading information in standard written form. This 'school information' includes any information given to pupils by the school, such as letters, handouts and worksheets, textbooks, timetables, handbooks, test and examination papers, notices and notice boards, posters around the school, information about school events, and reports on progress.

## **4 Further actions**

4.1 The local authority:

- has a long-term plan to better align the Local Offer website pages with the Family Hub pages so that families have a more seamless journey through the universal information to the more targeted and statutory information.
- is working on a programme to digitise some of the content of Roadshows (where we visited parents at schools to inform them about the SEND information hub) including an animation about the Local Offer.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

Implementation of this strategy is embedded in the core work of a number of teams within the local authority and its partners:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Delivered by</b>
Access to the curriculum	Special Education Needs (SEN) Inclusion Advisers
	Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS)
	Communication and Assistive Technology (CAT) Team
	School Improvement Service
	Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT)
	Educational Psychology Service
	Physical Disability Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (PDSTLS), Visual Impairment (VI) and Hearing Impairment (HI) Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service.
Improving the physical environment	Area Education Teams
	Capital Projects Team
	School Access Initiative (SAI) Team
	Capital Finance Team
	Access-able
	Physical Disability Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (PDSTLS), Visual Impairment (VI) and Hearing Impairment (HI) Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), Kent and Medway Communication and Assistive Technology Service.
Improving access to information	Local Offer Team
	Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS)
	Visual Impairment (VI) and Hearing Impairment (HI) Services
	Kent Association for the Blind

Work to improve the quality of our SEND services is ongoing and subject to a significant amount of reporting and monitoring, through the SEND Assurance Board and its subordinate structures of Transformational Operations Groups and the CATIE Monitoring and Evaluation Group. Therefore, the effectiveness of this strategy will be reviewed utilising information collated via these structures, rather than introducing further, separate monitoring and review structures.

Aspects relating to improving the physical environment are co-ordinated and overseen in the Education Asset Board. This Board oversees the education capital programmes, including the School Access Initiative. It oversees progress on the aim to ensure all localities have a pattern of schools to meet the differing accessibility needs of the wider community.

The strategy will be updated in 2027.