

Directorate

**2013**

of

Children and Families

**Accessibility Strategy**

**2024**

# Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing equality legislation including the Disability Discrimination Act and others. The function of the Equality Act has been to simplify the law and bring together the duties and requirements within one piece of legislation. The effect of the Act is to extend protection to groups of people who were previously covered by separate laws and to incorporate the provisions included within previous equality legislation.

The Equality Act has introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (sometimes also referred to as the ‘general duty’) that applies to public bodies, including maintained schools and academies (including Free Schools) and which extends to all protected characteristics - race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

Local authority accessibility strategies and school accessibility plans are a requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 - This Accessibility Strategy complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act.

As well as general duties for public bodies, the Equality Act states the legal obligations that schools, early years providers, post-16 institutions, Local Authorities and others have towards disabled children and young people:

• They must not directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass, or victimize disabled children and young people.

• They must protect disabled pupils from discrimination and harassment and foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled peers:

• They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not put at a substantial disadvantage

The reasonable adjustments duty (schedule 13 of the Equality Act 2010)

The duty to make reasonable adjustments requires schools and other education providers to take positive steps to ensure that children and young people with disabilities can enjoy the benefits, facilities and services provided for all children and young people.

Reasonable adjustments meet the statutory duty when they act to prevent children and young people with disabilities being placed at a substantial disadvantage. Guidance for education providers on making reasonable adjustments is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In Redcar and Cleveland, we have produced a Reasonable Expectations in Mainstream Schools Guidance Document please click the link for more information:

[Reasonable Expectations in Mainstream School | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/i-think-my-child-needs-help-school/reasonable-expectations-mainstream-school)

The duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one and therefore the setting needs to make plans in advance about what children and young people with disabilities might require and what adjustments might need to be made. They should not wait until the children and young people are on roll.

# Key Aims of the Accessibility Strategy

Requirements for local authorities to put in place an accessibility strategy are specified in schedule 10 of the Act: Accessibility for disabled pupils. This schedule provides for accessibility arrangements for pupils in schools as set out in section 88.

The key aims of the Accessibility strategy are:

1. To enable all pupils, whatever their needs, to have access to the full range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.

2. To improve the physical environment of schools to ensure, wherever possible, that accessibility is not a barrier to preventing pupils from attending their local schools.

3. To ensure that information provided by a school is made available to pupils and parents with disabilities, using alternative formats where required.

4. To ensure that admissions processes to schools and other education providers are fair and enable pupils with SEND to access high quality provision that meets their needs.

5. The delivery of services should be made within a reasonable timeframe.

6. Are delivered in ways which are determined after taking into account pupil’s disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

In keeping with the legislation, this Accessibility Strategy sets out the ways in which the

Council will increase access to education for disabled pupils, in the schools and settings for which it is responsible. We will work with schools to ensure that both the curriculum and schools’ IT meet accessibility requirements set out within both education and equalities legislation.

In line with the Children and Families Act 2014, Redcar and Cleveland are committed to:

• a person-centred, joined up approach to identifying and meeting the needs of children, young people and their families

• increased engagement and participation of young people and families so that they have greater choice and control, are listened to and their concerns are resolved swiftly

• a published local offer of support, services, and provision, how to access it and how to raise concerns or seek redress

• the use of effective practice, data and wider intelligence and independent assessment to drive improvement

• clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities and

• increased integration of services and joint commissioning across the Local Authority and Health. The Accessibility Strategy complements the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Strategy and helps to turn the vision for the education of children and young people with SEND into reality. Improving access to education for pupils with SEND is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, participation in society, access to employment opportunities and inclusion within mainstream and specialist education settings.

# The purpose and direction of Redcar and Cleveland’s Accessibility Strategy: Vision and Values

Our vision is to enable all children and young people to aspire to and achieve their full potential, giving them the basis for a successful life as active members of the community. We want all CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to be included and valued, so that they can live happy and fulfilling lives. We will have services that will make a difference to families because they are joined up, inclusive, easy to access, close to home and adapt to meet individual’s needs.

Learning is at the heart of delivering that vision and improving the attainment of all children is a key priority. Redcar and Cleveland local authority acknowledges that the attainment of pupils needs to be improved, including those pupils with impairments. Therefore, raising attainment is a key priority. School settings offer great opportunities and responsibilities for making sure all children stay safe and healthy, enjoy, and achieve and make a positive contribution to their communities in order that they can get the most out of life now and in the future. The guiding principle underpinning this strategy is to make learning accessible to all our children in ways that will promote the best outcomes.

We want the very best for our children, starting with early years through to their transition into adulthood. Together with our partner agencies we are working towards achieving this common aim.

There are many challenges for schools and the local authority to overcome, to ensure that we can deliver the very best education for all children. We need to respond to changes ahead and to make efficient and cost-effective use of investment opportunities in the context of challenging economic circumstances and in a changing and increasingly more diverse school system of maintained schools, non-maintained academies, and free schools.

Our aim is to ensure that children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are at the heart of our vision. Our strategy aims to provide the very best education for all our children, delivered as locally as possible to the child’s home and community.

It is important to note that a pupil with a disability does not necessarily have special educational needs. A pupil with a disability has special educational needs if they require any special educational provision to be made for them to access education. Children and young people may have either a disability and/or special educational needs.

# Improving access to information

The requirement in the Children and Families Act 2014 to develop a Local Offer has the express purpose of making information more accessible.

The local authority is committed to reviewing and updating the Local Offer on a regular basis and have recently updated our Local Offer site, which is now fully accessible on mobile phones for improved accessibility - [Accessibility | Redcar and Cleveland (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/site-terms/accessibility)We will also use the You said, We did area to adapt the site by taking into account feedback received from children and young people and their parents and carers. Schools and other education providers have a responsibility to provide accessible information to parents and pupils to ensure that children and young people with SEND are not disadvantaged. Information provided should be clear and free of jargon. Where appropriate, particularly for children and young people or parents with sensory impairments, information may need to be made available through alternative methods and formats.

The Redcar and Cleveland Local Offer website is an online resource for children and young people with SEND and their families. Any member of the public who cannot access the internet, or requires assistance to do so, can utilize a number of local services to help them. These services are as follows:

Redcar and Cleveland Libraries: any member of a Redcar and Cleveland Library can visit their local library to use the IT equipment there for free and members of staff will assist people in the use of the Local Offer as necessary.

Schools in Redcar and Cleveland are engaged with supporting children and young people and families in the use of the Local Offer if necessary – information is shared with the SENDCo’s in school.

Information is shared via social media through the Local Offer Facebook page and through the corporate website.

A variety of professionals from the local authority and outside the local authority, such as NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, are encouraged to work with families, supporting them in the use of the Local Offer.

The local authority is committed to reviewing and updating the Local Offer on a regular basis, taking into account feedback received from children and young people and their parents and carers. Schools and other education providers have a responsibility to provide accessible information to parents and pupils to ensure that children and young people with SEND are not disadvantaged. Information provided should be clear and free of jargon. Where appropriate, particularly for children and young people or parents with sensory impairments, information may need to be made available through alternative methods and formats.

[[Schools and colleges | Redcar and Cleveland (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/schools-and-colleges))](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send) contains information about schools, colleges, and training providers across the borough and further afield. For information about schools providing more specialist support such as additionally resourced provision or special school – click this link [My child needs more specialist education - What is available? | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/my-child-needs-more-specialist-education-what-available)

# Schools in Redcar & Cleveland

The Accessibility Strategy sets out the local authority plan to increase access to education for pupils with disabilities in the schools for which it is responsible. Schools should take account of the local authority strategy when drawing up their own school accessibility plans. The strategy is also relevant to academies, free schools and other education settings not maintained by the local authority as they also have a statutory duty to draw up and publish a school accessibility plan.

Schools should provide details of how the curriculum is adapted or made accessible for

pupils with SEND. Provision maps are an efficient way of showing all the provision that the school makes which is additional to and different from that which is normally available for all pupils.

Special educational provision is underpinned by high quality teaching and is compromised by anything less. The following is considered good practice in schools:

• high expectations are set for every pupil using appropriate assessments to agree

outcomes to be achieved.

• lessons are differentiated and personalized to ensure there are no barriers to

every pupil achieving.

• effective classroom practice promotes independence.

• staff have the support, advice, information and training they require to

effectively meet the needs of individual pupils.

• a member of the governing body, or a sub-committee, with specific oversight for

arrangements for SEND, meets regularly with the Head teacher and SENCO to

review how resources are allocated, the impact they are making and ensures SEND

is considered as a whole school strategic issue.

Schools must publish their Accessibility Plans. The Accessibility Plan should be appended to or be part of the SEN Information Report. Ofsted may request a school’s accessibility plan as part of inspection evidence.

The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 states that a school’s reasonable adjustments, along with other provisions, must be described in their ‘SEN Information Report’. Schools are responsible for updating their SEN Information Report on an annual basis. Links to this information along with School’s SEN Policy is provided on the Redcar and Cleveland Information Directory though the Local Offer.

In September 2012 the duty to provide auxiliary aids and services (including specialist equipment which could include laptops and tablets) was extended to include schools. This places schools and other education providers under a duty to provide aids and services where it is reasonable and where it would prevent a disabled pupil being put at a substantial disadvantage when compared to his or her non-disabled peers. Examples of auxiliary aids include coloured layovers, pen grips, adapted physical education equipment, adapted keyboards and computer software.

# Improving environmental access

Redcar and Cleveland local authority aim to integrate students with disabilities in mainstream settings where this is appropriate for their learning. However, some young people have significant and complex needs that require specialist facilities and resources. Any structural amendments to school buildings or any new school buildings must comply with the British Standard document which refers to DDA compliance; see attached. Click the link below for more information:

[Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-and-use-of-buildings-approved-document-m)

The local authority and schools are committed to improving the physical environment of schools to increase the extent to which pupils with SEND can take advantage of education. This may involve, for example, the creation of safe spaces, calming areas, and individual workstations, as well as providing a suitable physical environment for children and young people with disabilities. Improvements to physical access might include the following:

Children and young people with physical disabilities:

Ramps, handrails, widened doorways, electromagnetic doors, adapted toilets and washing facilities, emergency evacuation routes, physical access to outside areas and specialist curriculum areas.

Children and young people with vision impairment and/or hearing impairment:

Adjustable lighting, blinds, interior and exterior surfaces, induction loops, well designed room acoustics, signage, and way-finding systems.

All new school buildings must comply with current building regulations in relation to accessibility, although further adaptations may be required to meet the needs of specific children and young people.

Schools are required to undertake an accessibility audit of their site to identify key constraints and how they might be reasonably addressed. An accessibility audit will assess the site, offer suggestions of what is required to comply with accessibility requirements and how these might be prioritized. An accessibility audit is a live document which will inform schools of all areas of their site which do not meet the requirements of Equality Act 2010. It will help the school to identify a programme of work that it could reasonably be expected to progress.

All schools need to consider the reasonable adjustments which may be needed for children and young people with disabilities generally and for specific children and young people including those expected to transfer into the school.

The responsibility for funding lies with the school but where major works are likely to be required, local authority-maintained schools can submit a business case for additional funding as part of the wider Schools Capital programme. Academies have their own capital funding arrangements directly through the Education Funding Agency.

# Supporting vulnerable learners

Our schools believe that to improve the life chances of and achieve the vision for vulnerable learners across the borough; the following outcomes should be considered.

Vulnerable learners are recognised early by agencies and help, and support provided as soon as possible.

Agencies demonstrate their commitment to being responsible for all vulnerable learners by securing shared, high-quality outcomes for them beyond the immediate confines of their own organisations.

Mechanisms are secured to ensure decision making is open, transparent, consistent and in the long-term interest of vulnerable learners.

Education settings further embrace partnerships and school-to-school working, through sharing expert staff and innovative approaches, to challenge under performance and secure services they need to drive continuous improvement.

Employability skills and meaningful progression post 16 will be developed between education providers, local business, and industry.

The quality of learning experiences across the age range will be engaging and attractive to young people.

Children, young people, and their families will be encouraged and supported to share the accountability and responsibility for improving life chances for vulnerable learners.

# Increasing access to the curriculum for pupils with SEND

Our strategy places equality principles at the heart of service delivery. Services have been redesigned and reconfigured to achieve this as a result a focus on increasing access to the curriculum has been prioritised. Key strands of our strategy are:

Service Delivery

Training, advice, and guidance

Developing a range of specialist provision which shares and supports the development of good practice e.g. through delivery of outreach support.

# Service delivery

All services to schools; including Education Psychologists, Specialist Teaching Service, Attendance and Welfare, Pupil Inclusion and SEND Team, ensure that local authority support for inclusion and equality (including for pupils with SEN and disabilities) is central to the work of the service.

Full details of what each of these services can offer are listed on Redcar and Cleveland Directory of Services. Click the link below for more information:

[Education Services - Getting Help for Children and Young People in Redcar and Cleveland Local Authority | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/education-services-getting-help-children-and-young-people-redcar-and-cleveland).

Through the Resource and Support Panel, schools can access support from Educational Psychology Service, Specialist Teaching Service and Home and Hospital. This support is for children who do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) but may be on SEND support. Schools can also request high needs funding through this panel to enable schools to meet the needs of children requiring a higher level of support in their setting.

For children with an EHCP, schools can request access to specialist support services through the annual/interim review process.

The Inclusion Service work with schools to support young people who display challenging behaviour and are accruing suspensions or may be in danger of permanent exclusion. The team work closely with school and in some cases directly with the young person to ensure that they are able to access school and have access to support to meet their needs. The Inclusion Service work with families who are considering elective home education – this involves working closely with schools to ensure that any underlying learning need and/or reasonable adjustments have been made to ensure that the child feels able to access the school setting successfully.

Redcar and Cleveland’s SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) also offers independent support to parents of children with SEND (including at early stages of identification and assessment). Click the link below for more information:

[South Tees SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/i-think-my-child-needs-help-education/south-tees-send-information-advice-and).

We have a strong commitment to equality and achievement, which is a key performance priority in all service planning. Considerable work has been undertaken with schools to support them in improving practice to:

Remove barriers to learning.

Improve access through technologies and by making reasonable adjustments.

Adopt inclusive teaching strategies and improve classroom organisation and practice.

Promote autism/dyslexia friendly and communication friendly approaches to learning.

Increase awareness of social, emotional and mental health difficulties through training opportunities and commissioning services to meet needs within school settings.

Individual Local Offers from each of the schools in the borough are published on the school’s website and can also be accessed by clicking the link below for more information about schools in and out of area:

[Schools & Colleges | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/families-and-children/education-training-employment-support/schools-colleges) .

Each of the schools’ individual Local Offers detail the information in respect of accessible for children with special education needs and disabilities through their SEND Policy and SEND Information Report.

Our strategy is to prioritise the development of our schools and the workforce to promote the most effective inclusive learning and accessible curriculum.

# Training, advice, and guidance

Quality training, advice and guidance is being achieved through building a network of support and expertise, to assist schools in supporting access for pupils wherever they live within Redcar and Cleveland. Developing capacity in mainstream schools remains a key priority for the Local Authority and is delivered through:

* Redcar and Cleveland have improved the offer within their Family Hubs and work closely to with families feel supported and able access services for the family and the child from 0 – 19. This can include perinatal support, speech and language therapy and sensory support amongst many other services.
* Early Years SEND Practitioners work closely with early year providers in both PVI/School Nursery to support SEND children when placing children with individual needs within their setting to ensure needs are met and staff feel confident to meet need.
* Early Years providers (childminders, day nurseries and schools) are offered access to training and networking events as part of their continuous professional development. This includes training in specific areas such as speech and language, deaf and Autism awareness.
* All Special Education Needs Coordinator’s (SENCOs) are invited to attend regular network meetings both virtually and face to face to share and build on good practice across the Borough.
* Training is delivered to all schools through the Specialist Teaching Service for autism, learning difficulties and social, emotional, and mental health.
* Virtual School offer training to understand attachment/trauma related difficulties to schools.
* Secondary Pastoral/Vulnerable Leads/SENDCo’s have undertaken bespoke training for SEND and behaviour support.

An effective network of skilled teachers, with specific expertise is maintained; these include leading practitioners, advanced skills teachers as well as local and national leaders in education that can demonstrate best practice and support other local schools.

# Ensuring fair school admissions processes

Redcar and Cleveland County Council is the admissions authority for all local authority-maintained schools, including nursery classes in maintained schools. Academies are their own admission authorities.

There are two school admission pathways for children with SEND, as follows:

• For children with Education, Health and Care plan, applications are handled by the local authority special educational needs and disabilities team.

• For children with SEN but without an Education, Health and Care plan, families apply for admission to a school through the normal application process.

Both processes must comply with the School Admissions Code, the Equality Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014 and other relevant legislation.

The local authority’s In-Year Fair Access Protocol can offer priority placement to a mainstream school in certain circumstances for vulnerable pupils or those with a protected characteristic but without an Education, Health and Care, Plan.

# Specialist provision in Redcar and Cleveland

We aim to support most children in their local mainstream schools; however, we recognise that some children require more specialist provision and therefore a key aspect of our strategy is to develop and consistently review a range of local specialist provision.

Where placement at a specialist educational provision is being considered, the local authority will make a decision through the Redcar and Cleveland MAEHC Panel with reference to the Redcar and Cleveland admissions guidance for specialist settings. Information on the facilities provided at each school can be found on each school’s website and/or through the local offer [My child needs more specialist education - What is available? | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/my-child-needs-more-specialist-education-what-available).

The range of specialist provision in Redcar and Cleveland help us to meet the learning and behaviour needs of children within the Borough. These include Additional Resourced Provision (ARP’s) within four of our primary schools which supports children with a range of additional needs which cannot be met within a mainstream classroom – all children have to have an EHCP to access [Mainstream Schools with Additionally Resourced Provision | Redcar & Cleveland Pin Site (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/local-offer-send/my-child-needs-more-specialist-education-what-available/mainstream-schools). For children with speech and language difficulty as their primary need, we have a language base within a mainstream primary offering outreach and in reach support. We have an Autism base within a secondary school for children with Autism or are on the neuro pathway. We have a short-term educational provision for children who have attendance issues due to mental health difficulties such as anxiety. We have a recently commissioned an assessment base within one of special schools to support primary age children who are receiving suspensions and in danger of permanent exclusion.

In some cases transport to the child’s setting may be needed, the local authority’s Home to School Travel Policy sets out the ways in which children and young people with disabilities can receive support with transport and help to develop independence with travel as an aspiration. Redcar and Cleveland’s policy has maintained travel assistance for post-16 learners with SEND, where specific criteria are met.

# Specialist support services

In Redcar and Cleveland, we offer a range of specialist health and mental health services to meet the needs of our children which can be delivered in school setting.

Education Support Services

* Early Years SEND Practitioners
* Educational Psychology Service
* Specialist Teaching Service
* Inclusion Service
* Attendance and Welfare Service
* Virtual School
* Primary Advisor

Specialist Health and Mental services offered in schools:

* 0-19 Health Visiting and School Nursing service
* Speech and Language service
* STARS – Sensory teaching, advisory and resource service for hearing and visually impairments
* Paediatric Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy
* Getting Help/Getting More Help support from CAMHS.
* CAMHS – Neuropathway
* Mental Health Teams in Schools

Social Care Support Services

* Early Help
* Children with Disabilities

For families with children presenting with neurodivergence such as Autism and/or Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, we have commissioned support from Daisy Chain to provide our Family Support Service. This has a monthly multi-agency meeting for parents/carers to attend and coffee morning drops ins along with one-to-one support, groups and workshop/webinars.

# Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council website ([www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/))

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is committed to making its website accessible in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

As such we are actively working to increase the accessibility and usability of our website and in doing so adhere to many of the national and international standards and guidelines available. For more information regarding RCBC websites [Accessibility | Redcar and Cleveland (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/site-terms/accessibility)

Redcar and Cleveland have invested in a new public facing corporate website and have also recently updated the Redcar and Cleveland Information Directory (previously known as People’s Information Network) [Redcar and Cleveland Information Directory | Redcar & Cleveland: Information Directory (redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)](https://informationdirectory.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/). The aim of both websites is to create a simpler, more welcoming user experience that has accessibility at its core. Further to this, we are working with our development partner to ensure that the design and build meets accessibility standards and remains flexible enough to ensure that information is able to be delivered quickly and easily.

We have also introduced a Face Book Page for both the corporate website and the Local Offer.

# Management, co-ordination and implementation

Responsibility and accountability for this Accessibility Strategy extends to the highest levels within RCBC and the People Services Directorate. The strategy is one of a number of approaches adopted by the council to help meet its stated ambition and to improve the attainment for all children and young people, including those with disabilities and barriers to their learning.