

# Accessibility Strategy

Title	Accessibility Strategy 2023-24
Description	The requirements for Local Authorities to put in place a written Accessibility Strategy are specified in Schedule 10 (Accessibility for Disabled Pupils) of the 2010 Equality Act.
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# Introduction and background

The Equality Act 2010 (hereafter referred to as the Act) brought together a range of equality duties and requirements within one piece of legislation.

The Act 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
- religion or belief
- gender reassignment
- age
- marriage /civil partnership
- sexual orientation
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage /civil partnership

This combined equality duty came into effect in April 2011. The public sector equality duty is a duty on public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. This can be viewed on the Government website: [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

The duty has three main elements. In carrying out their functions, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations across all characteristics - between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

## Disability definition

The Equality Act is a law which protects individuals from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as disability, is now against the law in almost all cases.

Disability is defined in the Equality Act of 2010 as “where a person has a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities”. This means that nationally, about 9% of children and young people and up to 22% of adults reported they had a disability (figures from The Family Resources Survey for the financial year 2020 to 2021; published in March 2022).

It is acknowledged that schools and settings do not necessarily have complete information about disabilities as this is not always disclosed by parents/ carers and there is no consistent national way of collecting such information.

## The SEND Code of Practice 2014 states:

*'a child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. A child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.'*

*'Many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability under the Equality Act 2010, that is '...a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.*

*This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing and long-term health conditions such as:*

- *asthma*
- *diabetes*
- *epilepsy*
- *cancer*

*Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have SEN, but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision, they will also be covered by the SEN definition”.*

## Surrey's vision

Our aspiration is to enable Surrey children and young people aged 0-25 with additional needs and / or disabilities to lead the best possible life. Further details are available in the Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Strategy 2023-26: [Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy \(2023 to 2026\) | Surrey Local Offer](#)

We believe that parents, carers, schools, the local authority, and partners should work together to ensure opportunities for every child and young person to strive for the highest aspirations. We must all work towards removing any barriers that may exist to learning and participation that can hinder or exclude child and young people with Additional Needs and Disabilities.

Surrey County Council's Inclusion Strategy 2022 sets out ten objectives that our Partnership is working towards. It's adopted inclusion statement, based on UNESCO statement of inclusion, is: *'Inclusion is a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children and young people through increasing participation in learning, by cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion with and from education'*. It is about inclusion in its widest sense, from celebrating diversity to ensuring accessibility to co-producing services with parents and broader stakeholders.

# Accessibility Strategy

This strategy sets out the Council's responsibilities for ensuring education is accessible for pupils with additional needs and disabilities in the schools for which it is responsible (publicly funded schools), specifically the following aims:

- 1) Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement**
- 2) Improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose 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) Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement**

The strategy applies to the Council's maintained schools, nurseries, and early years settings. It applies to children and young people with pupils with additional needs and disabilities who are currently in maintained schools.

- Who are in the school system but at an earlier key stage e.g., early years settings
- Who are not yet in the school system but are known to the Council or other agencies

The strategy is for schools, governors, parents/carers, children and young people, professionals, other educational settings, and members of the local community. It should provide guidance and be a reference point from which to inform and develop individual Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs) and SEN Support Arrangements (SSA) that are co-produced with pupils and their parents/ carers and educational professionals.

# **AIM 1: Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the schools' curriculum by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement.**

## **How this is achieved:**

- Schools will ensure access to the curriculum and provide equal opportunities to children and young people with Additional Needs and Disabilities schools need to consider how to improve the accessibility of the curriculum, covering teaching and learning, trips and visits and after school activities.
- Schools will provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and play a key role in planning to increase access to the curriculum for all pupils. Therefore, schools are required to have an 'Accessibility Plan' that demonstrates what actions the school is taking to increase access to the curriculum, particularly those with Additional Needs and Disabilities.
- All schools must "use their best endeavours" to provide "high quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised" and which should "meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people" (SEN Code of Practice 1.24).
- Surrey Education Services advise educational settings about suitable and reasonable adaptations to the inside and outside environment to help include pupils with SEND including those with sensory impairments or who are neurodivergent. Surrey Education Services ([surreycc.gov.uk](http://surreycc.gov.uk)).
- Schools are required to provide auxiliary aids for disabled pupils subject to the Reasonable Adjustment Duty. Equality Act 2010 ([legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk))
- Surrey's Physical and Sensory Support Service provide information advice and support to schools. They also provide specialist equipment to support access to learning and communication for children and students. Their aim is to ensure that children and students can access their learning environment and get the most out of their education.
- We provide support for schools and families and work to maintain the attendance and engagement of children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) or are Gypsy, Roma or Traveller (GRT) through our Surrey's Race Equality and Minority Achievement (REMA) team of teachers and support workers.
- The Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice (STIPs) offer includes support at all levels of the Graduated Response. They can work with any mainstream school to support the inclusion and achievement of children with additional and special educational needs.

## **AIM 2: Improving the physical environment of the schools for the purpose 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.**

### **How this will be achieved:**

- Schools will make reasonable adjustments as appropriate to ensure equity of access to the learning environment. Further information about what constitutes a reasonable adjustment is available in the Surrey County Council's Local Offer.
- Surrey Education Services advise educational settings about suitable and reasonable adaptations to the inside and outside environment to help include pupils with SEND including those with sensory impairments or who are neurodivergent. Surrey Education Services ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://surreycc.gov.uk))
- There has been significant investment in special school places in Surrey to enable children and young people to remain local to their families, with an additional 1,600 places created locally (by 2024) in specialist provision. Our strong partnerships with local special schools has enabled this to happen alongside robust forecasting of need to understand what the profile of need will look like county-wide over the coming years.
- Our SEND Capital Building programme is evidence based and has resulted in more places for autistic and neurodiverse children and young people in Surrey to allow them to stay closer to home and access education in their own communities. This has also highlighted to leaders the need for additional school places in the north and southeast of the county for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs which we are actioning together.
- Aim: Every year we publish details of school place planning and provision and continually consult on any proposals to expand schools: Provision of school places and school expansions - Surrey County Council ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://surreycc.gov.uk)).
- Our School Organisation Plan sets out our aims for providing education close to home to support all children and young people to achieve their potential. School Organisation Plan 2022-2032 ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://surreycc.gov.uk)).
- The Sustainability Strategy and Federation Policy outline the Council's approach and commitment to ensure the sustainability of all our settings and schools. Sustainability Strategy and Federation Policy ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://surreycc.gov.uk)).

## **AIM 3: Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible by an increased focus on relevance, modes of presentation and pupil involvement.**

### **How this will be achieved:**

- Information, advice and guidance is provided through the Local Offer and Family Information Service. These provide detailed information, advice and links to resources to support schools in utilising or accessing evidence-based interventions from the earliest stage.
- A comprehensive list of what provision that should be ordinarily available for all children and young people of statutory school age is published on the Surrey Local Offer and can be accessed by all visitors.
- Schools will publish information about what they provide for children with disabilities through their School Information Report which must be updated annually.
- We provide information and advice through a brochure produced by the Surrey Wellbeing Partnership based on the iThrive principles to support emotional and mental health and wellbeing.
- We have a countywide single point of access to discuss any concern about a child's learning called our L-SPA. This provides early intervention, support and challenge to providers to improve inclusion in mainstream settings, as well as signposting to education support services, early help or partner agencies.
- We commission Schools Alliance for Excellence (SAfE) to lead on statutory school improvement including school governance, sharing information, system leadership thus enabling schools to deliver high quality teaching and learning to all children including those with additional needs.
- We work with colleagues in the voluntary and community sector, particularly Surrey Youth Focus, to support a Third Sector SEND group which brings together all voluntary sector organisations in Surrey working to support children with additional needs and disabilities, to ensure consistency of approach and a strong voice for that part of our system.

# Duties on Schools:

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan that outlines how they will improve the access to education for disabled pupils over time. The school's Accessibility Plan should be published on the school website, and hard copies provided upon request. There should be a link between the school's Special Educational Needs information and the Accessibility Plan. Surrey's Local Offer website contains links to all school websites and SEN information and this should include their Accessibility plans.

## Local context

There were 201,993 pupils registered in Surrey in 2021/22. Just under half (46%) of Surrey pupils attend state-funded primary schools (Key Stages 1 to 2 which take place from ages 5 to 11). Just under 1 in 3 (32%) of pupils in Surrey are from state-funded secondary schools (Key Stages 3 to 4 which take place from ages 12 to 16).

The majority of children with additional needs and disabilities attend one of Surrey's mainstream schools. At SEN Support level this is 73% of all school age pupils and for those with EHCPs (32.5%) (DfE SEN 2 data 2020-21).

Surrey has similar rates of pupils with EHC plans or statements of SEN (4.6%) compared to England (4.0%) in 2021/22. Surrey pupils also have a similar prevalence of SEN support (13.0%) compared to England (12.6%).

In state-funded primary schools, 40 per cent of pupils have SEN support, in state-funded secondary schools, 31 per cent of pupils have SEN Support and 26 per cent of pupils in independent schools have SEN support.

In addition to state funded mainstream schools, Surrey has a range of more specialist provisions that cater for students with more complex needs, these include:

- specialist centres/bases at mainstream schools
- maintained special schools
- non-maintained special schools
- independent special schools approved under Section 41 of CAFA
- alternative learning provision / pupil referral units (PRUs)

The number of Surrey pupils in state-funded special schools increased by 8 per cent (223 pupils) in 2021/22. The number of pupils in state-funded special schools rose by 44 per cent in the last six years between 2015/16 to 2021/22 (from 2,024 to 2,911).

Further information on the range of provision in Surrey can be found on the website: [Schools](#) or on the Local Offer: [post 16 training, employment and vocational pathways](#)

# Governance

This Accessibility Strategy will be regularly reviewed by the contributors and revised/updated. This Strategy will be published on the Surrey Local Offer website: [Surrey Local Offer](#)

The strategy will be led by the Director for Education and Lifelong Learning through the Inclusion and Additional Needs partnership board.

# Key Legislation

Equality Act 2010 [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

The Equality Act 2010 is a statute which protects individuals from discrimination. It also places a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics, such as disability, is now against the law in almost all cases.

Children and Families Act 2014 [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Children and Families Act 2014 applies to all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities aged 0-25, as long as they are in or wish to remain in education or training (or are seeking a placement).

The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) sets out the guidance on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25.

# Key Documents

- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is an assessment of the current and future health and social care needs of the population of Surrey. It supports local leaders and commissioners to make informed decisions and to shape services in a way that best serves their communities. <https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/jsna/>
- Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Inclusion Strategy: [Surrey Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy \(2023 to 2026\) | Surrey Local Offer](#)
- Surrey Ordinarily Available Provision guidance 2022 (Schools) [Ordinarily available provision \(schools\) | Surrey Local Offer](#)
- Graduated response early years: [Graduated response early years | Surrey Local Offer](#)

# Additional resources

Our **Specialist Educational Support Services** work in partnership with schools towards achieving the above aims.

You can see more detailed information about their services on the Local Offer here: [Surrey inclusion and additional needs service offer | Surrey Local Offer](#), this includes:

- Physical and Sensory Support Service: [Physical and sensory support \(PSS\)](#)
- Speech and Language Service for children and young people: [SaLT for CYP](#) and [Speech and Language Therapy pre school](#)
- Educational Psychology: [Educational psychology](#)
- Specialist Teachers for Inclusive Practice: [Specialist teaching](#)
- Autism Outreach: [Directory | Surrey Local Offer](#)
- Specialist Early Education Service/ Portage: [Specialist early education service Portage](#)

Surrey Local Offer: [Surrey Local Offer](#)

Surrey Family Information Service: [Family Information Service - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

SEND Advice Surrey: [SEND Advice Surrey](#)

Healthy Surrey: Supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board, provides support for self-care, information, as well as signposting to local services available to Surrey residents. [Healthy Surrey](#)

MindWorks Surrey: Emotional wellbeing and mental health service for children and young people in Surrey: [Home :: Mindworks Surrey \(mindworks-surrey.org\)](#)

## Terminology

We recognise the importance of language and are committed to embedding the language set out in the Surrey ATLAS Preferred Terminology report. This includes the use of 'Additional Needs and Disabilities', rather than "Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)", wherever possible, however, we will sometimes need to continue to use the term 'SEND' or 'SEN', while this is the term used in national legislation. We have used the term SEN (Special Educational Needs) when quoting directly from legislation in this strategy.