



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 20TH MAY 2015

SUBJECT: PHYSICAL ACCESS STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee Members with the revised Physical Access Strategy for Schools in line with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The First Physical Access Strategy for Schools was produced in 2009, this document was reviewed in January 2015 with the revised Strategy detailing the current access status of all Caerphilly Schools in line with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010. The Strategy has previously concentrated on the accessibility arrangements for pupils and employees in line with legislative duties, however this version of the strategy includes advice on the provision of access for disabled parents, this is increasingly an area of discussion, with parents seeking adjustments to be made to accommodate their disabilities. Although all schools seek to support parents with disabilities and provide safe access to the school site to ensure participation in their child's education, the access provided must not compromise the safety of children or others on the school site. With this in mind the scope of reasonable adjustments for disabled parents in line with the Equalities Act 2010 is included in the revised version, in addition specific reference is made within the strategy to cover parents who use mobility scooters.
- 2.2 The amended strategy shows a great improvement since 2009 in the number of schools which are able to accommodate pupils with physical and medical needs, this is due to investment in school buildings and consultation at planning stage with relevant officers to ensure that accessibility is a key factor in school design, whether designing a new school building or refurbishment of an existing site.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Improvement of the Learning Environment to be inclusive to all learners, support parental choice of school for their child and to reduce transport costs to the Authority.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This is the first review of the Physical Access Strategy (appendix 1) and has been consulted with relevant officers. The strategy relates to access to school sites and buildings for children, young people and school based employees. The strategy also applies to authorised visitors such as Governors, parents and contractors who are also covered by the Equalities Act 2010 but to a lesser degree than the duty imposed for pupils and employees.

5. REPORT

- 5.1 The revised strategy provides the current position on accessibility of schools in Caerphilly County Borough, which has greatly improved since 2002 when Part 4 (Education) of the Disability Discrimination Act came into force. All schools now have a detailed accessibility survey which has been undertaken by the Corporate Disability Access Officer. This survey has for many schools led to improvements to meet the foundation standard of access supported by the Disability Equality Group (DEG), with provision of a disabled parking space, ramped access to the main entrance, automatic doors and provision of an accessible toilet. Only 13 schools do not meet the foundation standard, this is due to site and building restrictions, meaning these adaptations are not achievable.
- 5.2 Further adaptations have been funded by DEG and Education budgets to achieve a higher level of accessibility to accommodate a pupil with complex needs which may include physical and medical needs. Four mainstream primary schools are fully equipped to meet the needs of such pupils and one mainstream secondary school, this will increase to three mainstream secondary schools and five mainstream primary schools when YG Y Gwindy and Islwyn West Secondary schools are completed.
- 5.3 Moving forward the key priority will be to support parental choice for school placement where ever possible and adapting schools which are able to be adapted, taking into consideration funding available.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The report provides a positive position on equalities and the access to education for all pupils within the county. The requirements of the Equalities Act are anticipatory and those schools which can be further adapted in line with the accessibility survey, should be considered for such adaptations should budgets be available.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications of this report, however to improve standards of accessibility, schemes would need to be funded from individual School, Education Capital and Disability Equality Group Budgets.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Consultations have been undertaken and comments received are reflected in the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report relating to the revised "Physical Access Strategy for Schools".

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure continuous improvement in meeting the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to Education premises.

12. STATUTORY POWERS

12.1 School Standards and Framework Act 1998 Local Government Act 1972.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Physical Access Strategy for Schools 2015-2018