Accessibility Policy

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1. Our Commitment

At Waterside School, inclusion is not an add-on — it is central to who we are. As a specialist independent SEND school, we recognise that every learner comes to us with unique strengths, needs, and life experiences. Some learners may have faced barriers, misunderstanding, or even exclusion in previous educational settings. Our role is to remove these obstacles and create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment where every learner feels valued and able to thrive.

We believe that there should be no “invisible” learners at our school. Every individual matters, and every achievement is celebrated — whether academic, social, emotional, or personal. Ensuring accessibility means enabling learners to engage fully in school life with confidence and dignity. This includes recognising that participation extends beyond the classroom to the wider community and all school activities.

2. Our Legal Duties

This policy aligns with the Equality Act 2010, which requires schools to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of a disability or other protected characteristic. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on a person’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

At Waterside School, we go beyond legal compliance. We take positive steps to make reasonable adjustments to our environment, curriculum, and communications. These adjustments are designed to ensure that learners, staff, parents, and visitors can access all aspects of school life safely, comfortably, and without unnecessary barriers.

3.0 How We Ensure Accessibility

3.1 Physical Environment

We actively work to make all buildings and spaces safe and usable for everyone. Accessibility planning considers mobility needs, sensory sensitivities, medical requirements, and hidden disabilities. Recognising that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work, we provide a range of adjustments tailored to individual needs. These may include quiet spaces, adapted seating, visual supports, reduced sensory input, or specialist equipment. Adjustments are proactively planned, regularly reviewed, and adapted as learners' needs evolve. Safety, compliance, and regulatory standards form the foundation of our accessible environment.

3.2 Access to Learning

Every learner at Waterside School is entitled to a broad, balanced, and meaningful curriculum. Teaching approaches, resources, and learning environments are adapted to meet individual needs, ensuring that learners can fully engage with the curriculum. This may include differentiated instruction, personalised learning plans, visual supports, alternative communication systems, assistive technology, therapeutic support, and structured routines.

As a trauma-informed school, we recognise that behaviour is a form of communication. Accessibility therefore extends beyond physical or academic access to include emotional accessibility — creating a psychologically safe environment where learners feel secure enough to take risks, engage in learning, and develop independence. Our overarching goal is to prepare learners for adulthood while respecting their identities, strengths, and aspirations.

3.3 Access to Information

We are committed to sharing information in ways that are accessible and meaningful to all learners, parents, and carers. This may involve using simplified language, visual formats, translations, or alternative communication methods. We value parents' and carers' insights and work collaboratively to ensure that information is shared appropriately, confidentially, and in a timely manner.

3.4 Working in Partnership

Accessibility is the responsibility of everyone in the school community. While leaders are accountable for implementing and monitoring this policy, all staff contribute to creating an inclusive culture. We work closely with families, using EHCP consultations, transition meetings, and ongoing communication to understand each learner's needs. Adjustments are reviewed and updated as learners progress or their needs change.

3.5 Monitoring and Review

This Accessibility Policy is a living document, reviewed regularly to reflect changes in need, guidance, and best practice. Monitoring occurs through health and safety audits, environmental reviews, leadership oversight, and integration within school improvement planning. We are committed to continually improving our provision so that all learners can access:

- Our environment, including physical spaces and resources
- Our curriculum, including learning opportunities and teaching methods
- Our information, including communication and materials
- Our community, including social and extracurricular participation

By embedding accessibility in every aspect of school life, Waterside School ensures that every learner can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in a fully inclusive setting.

4.0 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

4.1 Schedule 21: Action Plan A – Improving Physical Access

Ref	Targets	Action	Person Responsible	Time Scale	Resources
Auditory Disabilities 1	To allow access to auditory information	• Source Eversound listening system or equivalent, if required for specific learners	Proprietor	By January 2027	Listening system
Ambulatory Disabilities 1 / Dexterity Disabilities 1	To allow parking in close proximity to buildings for those with ambulatory or dexterity disabilities	• Provide disabled reserved parking outside the main gate • This should be reserved with collapsable bollards	Proprietor	By September 2026	Paint Signage
Visual Disabilities 1	To allow unobstructed routes to, through and out of buildings	• to ensure hazard tape or yellow paint to identified areas of risk: ○ front steps/internal thresholds/ ○ changing floor level/garage ○ right and left sides of doors, on architrave • to place large signage with consideration given to font and colour choice suitable for those with visual impairments around buildings to indicate fire exits and toilets.	Headteacher Headteacher	By January 2027 By January 2027	Hazard tape Signage
Hidden Disabilities 1	To limit anxiety of access to new buildings and staff.	• Online tour of school • Create/install suitable signage for all key rooms	Headteacher Headteacher	By January 2027 September 2026	Signage

4.2 Schedule 22: Action Plan B – Improving Curriculum Access

Ref	Targets	Action	Person Responsible	Time Scale	Resources
External Communication 1	To ensure all parents/carers to have an understanding of the curricular provision available to the student	• Bi-annual online meetings for parents to understand and explore curriculum offering in order for partnership and reinforcement of positive attitude to school in the home environment. • Bi-annual reporting of child's attainment and progress, with guidance literature available for clarity of information.	Headteacher Headteacher	By January 2027/Ongoing Ongoing	N/A
External Communication 2	To ensure joint home/school awareness of any emerging needs/barriers to the curriculum.	• Termly review and report of any emerging needs in ambulatory, dexterity, visual, auditory or hidden disabilities. • Establish and maintain clear communication channels with parents/carers to share dynamic developments both in school and at home.	Headteacher/ SENCO Headteacher/ Pastoral Lead	Ongoing Ongoing	N/A
Internal Communication 1	For all staff to have knowledge of students needs and methods of supporting	• EHCP Navigator analysis and sharing of strategies to support students, as well as to identify emerging school-wide training needs • Key workers to be identified to support and oversee day to day development of individual students, and take responsibility for updating student profile	Headteacher/ SENCO/ Keyworker Headteacher	Ongoing Ongoing	N/A
External Expertise 1	To ensure early intervention and best practice in areas associated with OT and SALT.	• Work with Speak Easy to construct a framework to identify emerging needs that require OT or SALT intervention • Work with Speak Easy to establish strategies that all staff can use to benefit learners daily, based on their expertise	Headteacher/ SENCO/ Pastoral Lead	By January 2027	N/A
Visual Impairments 1	To allow visually impaired learners to access the curriculum	• Consult with Royal Institute for the Blind and Warwickshire's Visual Support Team to identify ways in which we can improve access to the curriculum for visually impaired learners	Headteacher	By January 2027/Ongoing	As identified
Hearing Impairments 1	To allow students with hearing impairments to access the curriculum	• Consult with Royal National Institute for the Deaf and Warwickshire's Hearing Support Team to identify ways in which we can improve access to the curriculum for auditorily impaired learners • Include beginners Makaton training for all staff regularly to support Learners with hearing loss or communication difficulties	Headteacher Headteacher/ Makaton Trainer	By January 2027/Ongoing By January 2027/Ongoing	As identified

4.3 Schedule 23 Action Plan C – Improving the Delivery of Written Information

Ref	Targets	Action	Person Responsible	Time Scale	Resources
External Communication	To ensure parents/carers and visitors to access written information	• Provide alternative formats available on request e.g. large font, braille, pictorial or symbolic • translate documents on request, with identified software (see resources)	Headteacher Headteacher	By January 2027/ Ongoing By January 2027/ Ongoing	As identified in 'Resources' section.
Internal Communication	To ensure students and staff have access to written materials	• Have alternative formats available on request e.g. large font, braille, pictorial or symbolic • translative documents on request, with identified software (see resources) • Provision of magnifier • Ensure clear font and coloured backgrounds in documents through consultation with Warwickshire Visual Support Team • Signage at base to have pictorial representation for non-readers • Work towards increasing literature/displays at school that promote equality & diversity	Headteacher Headteacher/ SENCO Headteacher Headteacher/ SENCO Headteacher Pastoral Lead	By January 2027/ Ongoing By January 2027/ Ongoing By January 2027 By January 2027 By January 2027, but ASAP By January 2027	Magnifier Signage/displays
Staff Training	To understand the needs of individual students	• Dissection of EHCP in Waterside Navigation Tool by SENCO to identify written information needs e.g. visual impairment • Consult with student around font size/colour of background etc • Consult with student around use of pictorial/symbols	Headteacher/ SENCO Keyworker Keyworker	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	N/A
External Expertise	To ensure best practice and high expectation of learners accessibility to provision	• Consult with Headteacher/External experts to understand alternative methods of reading written information and when appropriate to utilise these methods.	Headteacher	Ongoing	N/A
Resources	To ensure high quality translation of materials	• Research and invest in accurate translation software (Deep L, Memo Q, Global Link etc) • Research and invest in software for pictorial representation, having consulted NAS etc.	Headteacher Headteacher	By January 2027 By January 2027	As identified
Visually Impaired	To ensure visual impairment is in no way a barrier to academic achievement	• Report accessibility arrangement for examinations (if appropriate) to the Exams Officer (TBD) to book Reader or provide appropriate exams resources e.g. large font or braille.	Headteacher	Ongoing	N/A