

Disability Equality Scheme

2008-2011

This document has also been produced in large print. We will on request produce this document, or particular parts of it, into other languages and formats, in order that everyone can use and comment upon its content.

Mission Statement

Thomas Wolsey School is committed to providing a high quality, fair and equitable education to disabled pupils and students in an environment which meets their specific needs.

We welcome the duty to actively promote equality and eliminate discrimination and harassment.

We encourage the participation of disabled people in public life by actively taking steps to meet the needs of all our pupils and students and promote positive attitudes to disability.

Linda Hoggarth
Chair of Governors

Nancy McArdle
Headteacher

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Please note that the word 'disabled' is used to describe all those covered by the definition of disability included within the Disability Discrimination Act. This should be understood to include pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors, visitors, and people using the school.

1. Introduction

This document is a response to the legal requirement of all schools to have in place a Disability Equality Scheme.

Thomas Wolsey School aims to be inclusive in all its practice for all members of the school community and parents/ carers. The school community welcomes and celebrates diversity and is always striving to make inclusion a reality for all.

This document sets out the ethos of the school, the policy and the action plan outlining the 3 year scheme to ensure that practice is consistent with policy.

The scheme has been written in consultation with Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff, and Governors.

The scheme covers the three Year period from January 2008 until January 2011.

The purpose of this scheme is to ensure that Thomas Wolsey School delivers its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005.

This scheme and the accompanying action plan set out how the school and Governing Body will promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

2. The Thomas Wolsey School

Thomas Wolsey is an all age special school with 93 pupils on roll at the date of issue of the Scheme. The pupils have physical disabilities and associated learning disabilities.

The school recognises the importance of 'Every Child Matters' and the outcomes are embedded in school planning.

The school recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce and the opportunities that this provides for the school ethos.

The Thomas Wolsey School supports a proactive approach at strategic, policy, management and classroom levels. The school is an inclusive community which strives to make inclusion a reality for all.

The school aims to make reasonable adjustments to take account of pupils' disabilities and this may at times involve 'more favourable' treatment. This could involve additional coaching for pupils or special facilities at break and mealtimes.

Many pupils have communication difficulties and require a variety of communication approaches e.g. signing, symbol books and electronic communication aids. This equipment is available through funding by school, Suffolk Communication Aids Centre, the National Health Service and the Local Authority. All pupils who require communication aids are assessed and provided with the appropriate individualised equipment.

Many pupils have complex medical needs and may require medical intervention such as gastronomy feeding during the school day. All pupils work with specially trained staff and some pupils with complex needs have access to specialist learning support assistants on an individual basis.

The school actively promotes a positive attitude to disability and all our pupils are encouraged to take a full part in all areas of school life.

At Thomas Wolsey School we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for disabled pupils, staff and all those receiving services from the school. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which people feel free to tell us about their disability and participate fully in school life. The achievement of disabled pupils will be monitored and we will use this data to raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will make reasonable adjustments to make sure that the school environment is as accessible as possible. At Thomas Wolsey School we believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

3. The Legal Framework

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (The Act) introduced new laws making it illegal to discriminate against disabled people, giving disabled people new rights in the areas of employment and accessing goods and services, and making it illegal to refuse to serve a disabled person, or offer a lower standard of service to a disabled person for a reason related to their disability. The Act was amended in 2005 by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which places a duty on all public authorities,

including schools, to promote disability equality requiring a proactive approach to disability issues.

The General Duty

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a general duty on schools, which need to have due regard for the following when carrying out their functions:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and non disabled people.
- Eliminating unlawful discrimination against disabled people
- Eliminating harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encouraging participation by disabled people in public life
- Taking steps to take account of disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

These six elements aim to create positive attitudes and a proactive response to Disability issues.

The Duty applies to all disabled pupils, staff and those using services provided by schools.

Specific Duties

- To produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme.
- Implement the above scheme.
- Review and revise the scheme every three years.

The scheme is required to set out:

- How people with disabilities were involved in the scheme.
- How the school will meet the duties. (Appendix 1 – The Action Plan)
- How the school will assess the impact of the scheme on disabled people.
- How the school will collect information in relation to employment and work experience.

Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act

Duties under Part 4 of the Act require the Governing Body to plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils in 3 ways:

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school curriculum;
- improving the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled pupils can take advantage of education and associated services;
- Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information.

This scheme incorporates the school's plans to maximise the educational opportunities for disabled pupils.

Part 5A of the Disability Discrimination Act

Duties under Part 5A of the Act require the Governing Body to:

- promote equality of opportunity for disabled people: pupils, staff, parents, carers and other people who use the school or may wish to; and
- Prepare and publish a disability equality scheme to show how they will meet these duties.

The Duty requires schools to be more proactive in promoting disability equality and eliminate discrimination.

The Act applies to the school in a range of ways and in particular three main school functions.

- The school in its main function of providing education to pupils.
- The school as an employer.
- The school as a provider of services to parents, carers and the wider community.

4. Definition of Disability

The Act defines a disabled person as someone who has: a physical or a mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

People covered by the Act may have:

- 'physical impairment' including sensory impairments;

- ‘mental impairment’ including learning difficulties and an impairment resulting from or consisting of a mental illness;
- past disabilities;
- substantial (meaning ‘more than minor or trivial’) or long term (meaning 12 months or more) disabilities;
- severe disfigurements; or
- progressive conditions.

The definition includes a wide range of impairments, including hidden impairments such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These are all likely to amount to a disability, but only if the effect on the person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities is substantial and long-term, as defined above.

In terms of ‘normal’ day-to-day activities, people must be affected by at least one of the following: The effect on normal day-to-day activities is on one or more of the following:

- mobility;
- manual dexterity;
- physical co-ordination;
- continence;
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- speech, hearing or eyesight;
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand;
- perception of the risk of physical danger.

Some people are covered by the definition from the point of diagnosis: those with cancer, multiple sclerosis, HIV infection.

5. The Social Model of Disability

Our Disability Equality Scheme demonstrates our school’s commitment to the ‘Social Model of Disability’ and reflects our determination to fully meet its obligations as set out in legislation.

The Social Model of Disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person’s impairment or difference.

The Social Model of Disability looks at ways of removing barriers which restrict life choices for people with impairments or differences.

When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

People with disabilities developed the Social Model of Disability because the traditional Medical Model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.

(Impairment is defined as the limitation of a person's physical, mental or sensory function on a long term basis.)

6. How the school plans to meet the Duty

Pupils

i) Educational Opportunities

All pupils have access to the same curriculum opportunity. Our curriculum documents evidence this.

The school aims for all pupils to have equal opportunities throughout the school day and balance therapy input with curriculum.

Specialist equipment: All of the pupils in school have access to individual specialist equipment including ICT switches, seating, communication aids, individualised fine motor equipment and standing frames.

All pupils have specialist equipment for mobility or seating if they require it. Funding mechanisms are set up through joint health and education working and pupils are regularly assessed and provided with individually modified equipment.

All pupils have access to extra curricular activities including school trips regardless of their disability.

ii) Outreach Placements

All pupils have access to mainstream education on the request of parents and advice of school staff.

Each placement is carefully planned involving parents, pupils, health professionals and school staff from mainstream and Thomas Wolsey

School in all stages of the placement .*See Outreach Policy and Protocol for more details.*

Pupils have access to specialist equipment in both placements funded by the Local Authority, the mainstream school and Joint Equipment fund (Education and Health funding)

iii) Work Experience

All pupils have access to work experience from Year 10. All pupils have equal rights and placements are carefully matched to the needs and wishes of the pupil and their parents.

The school welcomes volunteers and students with disabilities into school for work experience as far as is reasonably possible.

Parents/Carers

All parents/carers are welcomed into school and provided with information in appropriate formats if needed.

If parents are unable to attend Reviews because of Health issues Thomas Wolsey staff will arrange a venue closer to home to ensure that all parents have equal access to information.

Thomas Wolsey School strives to ensure that all parents/ carers have access to resources that they may need when they visit school e.g. an accessible toilet is available for men and women.

Staff

All staff recruited have equal rights and there is no discrimination in the process.

Employees with disabilities are welcomed into school and have equal opportunities.

Information about disability is collated centrally by the Local Authority.

The views of disabled staff will be sought to ensure that appropriate adjustments are made for them in the workplace.

The school promotes equality of opportunity for all in regard to training.

There are set procedures in place to ensure that all staff have the appropriate support for training e.g. a trained signer is available on a regular basis for a member of staff with a hearing impairment to participate more fully in all staff meetings and training.

Governing Body

The Governing Body welcomes Governors from all sections of the community.

Governors will need to ensure that the procedures for candidates to stand for election and for parents to vote for candidates are accessible to disabled people. However, the result of the election is not covered and disabled candidates will not be able to claim that they were not elected simply because they were disabled. Once a disabled parent governor is elected, the school governing body functions in relation to that parent are covered and the school must ensure that they can participate fully in school life.

Wider Community

All members of the community are welcomed into school.

The school strives towards high standards of accessibility for all.

Disability Awareness assemblies are delivered by school staff and pupils.

Disability awareness resource boxes are available for loan to mainstream settings.

Plans for the Future

The school is due for co-location at Thurleston High School, Ipswich, planned for January 2009. This will offer many educational and social opportunities for all pupils in school.

Careful consideration will be given to making reasonable adjustments to the existing school building as it will only be in use for the next year.

The new building is under construction and access issues have been highlighted during the planning stages.

7. Involvement of Pupils, Parents, Staff and Governors

The school consulted Pupils, Parents, Staff and Governors in the drawing up of this document. An initial meeting was held with staff from all areas of the school and subsequent meetings involved the School Council, individual members of staff, the Governing body and pupils. People with disabilities were involved in all stages.

A Questionnaire was sent to parents and staff and the findings will be collated.

Confidentiality has been respected throughout this process.

A working party has met and will continue to meet termly to review the plan and assess its progress. The working party will include staff, parents, pupils and a representative from the Governing Body. The working party will include disabled representatives.

Methods of communication with parents and pupils have been carefully considered and a 'BSL signer' will be available if necessary. Symbol sheets will be available for pupils who may require them.

Issues raised by pupil, parents and staff will be identified on the Action plan.

8. Monitoring the Scheme

To meet the Disability Equality Duty it is essential that aspects of school life are monitored to identify whether there is an adverse impact on children and young people with disabilities. The following should be monitored:

- Achievement by pupils with disability
- Staff with disabilities (including numbers, type of disability and satisfaction rates in staff surveys etc.)
- Parents with disabilities and carers

We will monitor the impact of the action taken in implementing the Action Plan to ensure that progress is being made towards meeting the Disability Equality Duty, and to ensure that no adverse impact is occurring as a result of the actions. The Action Plan will be monitored in accordance with the specified timescales. If any adverse impacts are

identified during the monitoring process, the Action Plan will need to be revised.

An annual report will be produced which will outline the progress of the Disability Equality Scheme and assess the implementation of the Action Plan for effectiveness. The report will be presented to the Governors during the course of their full meeting and a summary will be circulated to Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff and the wider community through newsletters and the website.

The first annual report will be issued in February, 2009 alongside the Annual report on the school Accessibility Plan.

The findings of the annual report will be used to improve the Disability Equality Scheme and feed into future practice.

The Disability Action Plan will also form part of the School Development Plan and will be linked to other policies.

9. Impact Assessments

Impact assessment is a method used to ensure that the potential for discrimination does not occur in our policies and practices, including teaching. It is also a useful way to identify positive action that can be taken to promote equality and anticipate the requirements of our pupils and staff.

The purpose of an impact assessment is to ensure that the activities of Thomas Wolsey School:

1. Do not disadvantage people with disabilities.
2. Identify potential barriers in advance
3. Best promote equality of opportunity

Thomas Wolsey School reviews all policies and practices on an annual basis to take account of changes in legislation and ensure good practice. A timetable for impact assessing existing policies over the period of the Scheme and a prioritisation system will be established because the policies cannot all be done at once.

In the instance of each policy or practice we will:

1. Identify whether there is a disability implication.

2. Involve disabled people in reviewing the impact of this.
3. Assess the impact for both positives and negatives.
4. Identify steps to eliminate or reduce any negative impacts.
5. Publish relevant outcomes.

All policies when they are reviewed will have reference to promoting Disability Equality.

10. Reviewing the Scheme

The scheme will be reviewed termly by the Disability Focus Group and the Action Plan will be reviewed to ensure that appropriate progress is being made.

The Disability Focus Group will be set up with a lead chair that will be responsible for the planning and coordination of meetings and arranging reporting.

The Scheme and the Action Plan will be published on the website and be made available to Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff, Governors and the wider community in appropriate formats.

School staff will aim to continue to eliminate any discrimination by good practice and through pastoral work in the classroom.

The school will ensure that any disability related harassment of any staff member, Parents, carers, user or pupil is identified and addressed.

The scheme will be reviewed at termly meetings but will be formally reviewed and revised to be re issued in January 2011.

***Nicky Lyle and Linda Hogarth
27th January 2009***

Appendix 1 - The Action Plan

[attached as a separate document]

Appendix 2 – List of relevant Policies

- *Specialist Learning Support Assistants and referral systems.*
- *Managing Equality of Opportunity (September 2005)*
- *Outreach Protocol and Inclusion Policy.*
- *Work Experience policy.*
- *Special Educational Needs Policy.*

Appendix 3 - Check list for Staff and Governors

1. Is information collected on disability with regards to pupils, staff and other users of the school? Is this information used to improve the provision of services?
2. Is pupil achievement monitored by disability? Are there trends or patterns in the data that may require additional action?
3. Are disabled pupils encouraged to participate in school life? How is this shown through representation in school events such as class assemblies and school council?
4. Is bullying and harassment of disabled pupils monitored and is this information used to make a difference?
5. Is disability portrayed positively in school books, displays and discussions such as circle time and class assemblies?
6. Does the school take part in annual events such as Deaf Awareness week to raise awareness of disability?
7. Is the school environment as accessible as possible to pupils, parents/carers, staff, Governors and visitors to the school?
8. Are open days/evenings and other events which parents and carers attend held in a fully accessible part of the school?
9. Is information available to parents, visitors, pupils and staff in formats which are accessible if required? Is everyone aware of this?
10. Are procedures for the election of parent governors open to candidates and voters who are disabled?