



DOWNSEND
SCHOOL

Accessibility Plan

Downsend School

UK

September 2026

Registered in England & Wales - Cognita Schools Limited No. 02313425
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COGNITA

THRIVE IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING WORLD

1. Introduction

1.1. We are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful and equitable environment where all members of our school community are valued and supported. This commitment underpins our approach to accessibility and informs the principles set out in this plan. This document outlines our Accessibility Plan as required by the Equality Act 2010. This plan applies to staff, pupils, parents and all users of the school site and services. The Act makes it unlawful for Cognita, which is the responsible body of a school, to discriminate against, harass, or victimise a pupil or potential pupil or staff in relation to:

- admissions;
- the way we provide education for pupils;
- the way we provide pupils access to any benefit, facility or service;
- by excluding any pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

This plan should be read alongside the School's SEND Policy, Curriculum Policy, and arrangements for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of Fundamental British Values.

1.2. The Act outlines some protected characteristics (below) and we pay due regard to these:

- Sex
- Race
- Disability
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity

1.3. This plan fulfils the requirements of the Independent School Standards.

2. Definition

2.1. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (UK), a person is defined as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

-*Substantial* is defined as more than minor or trivial.

-*Long-term* is defined as having lasted or likely to last for at least 12 months.

This definition includes individuals with sensory impairments (such as those affecting sight or hearing) and those with long-term health conditions, including but not limited to diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. This Accessibility Plan outlines how we ensure that we are working to remove barriers to learning and access in our school. The plan is reviewed every three years and monitored annually to ensure progress is made against its objectives.
- 3.2. The school aims to treat all its pupils, staff and visitors fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all pupils without discrimination of any kind. This plan should be read alongside the school's SEND Policy and Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 3.3. The school ensure all staff are trained in understanding equality and disability issues in line with the Equality Act.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

- 4.1. We are committed to ensuring that no aspect of school life places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage in comparison to their non-disabled peers. Where a potential disadvantage cannot be avoided, we take all reasonable steps to reduce or remove its impact.
- 4.2. When it is reasonable to do so, we provide auxiliary aids or services for a disabled pupil, when such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces compared to other non-disabled pupils.
- 4.3. Where an auxiliary aid is not provided through an Education, Health and Care Plan or other statutory arrangement, the school will nevertheless consider whether it is required as a reasonable adjustment. Any decision would be taken on the basis of the facts of an individual case, including cost implications.
- 4.4. There is no legal definition of auxiliary aids. We interpret the term to mean any or all of the following: helpful; providing support or assistance; and that these can be things or persons which help. We include hearing loops, adaptive keyboards, and special software.
- 4.5. Our SEND Policy defines what provision we make available including reasonable adjustments in our school. We will consider what is reasonable in the context of our school, given the circumstances of each individual case.
- 4.6. Where the auxiliary aid has a benefit to the rest of the child's life outside of school, it would be unreasonable for our school to make such provision; e.g. hearing aids.
- 4.7. We consider that effective and practicable adjustments for disabled pupils will involve little or no cost or disruption and will therefore be considered as reasonable. Where substantial adaptations are required which are not contained within our three-year accessibility plan, we reserve the right to deem these as unreasonable.

- 4.8. It is our aim to ensure that disabled pupils play as full a part as possible in school life and our accessibility plan and reasonable adjustments help support that aim. Where any adjustment would have a detrimental effect on other pupils, we would not consider it to be reasonable. For example, if a geography field trip were planned to involve climbing and a wheelchair user could not take part, we would carefully consider how the disabled pupil could participate viably.

5. Aspects of the Plan

5.1. Our Accessibility Plan focuses on the following areas:

- Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum
- Improving the physical environment to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided

Improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils, staff, parents and visitors.

6. Responsibility

- 6.1. It is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that the school has an Accessibility Plan which matches the needs of the school and to ensure that it is available on the school's website. All staff have a role in implementing the plan through inclusive practice and regular reflection on barriers to access within their areas of work.
- 6.2. It is the responsibility of the Proprietor (via the Director of Operations) to ensure that the plan is reviewed annually and is fit for purpose.

Accessibility Plan

Actions to increase access to the curriculum and learning

Targets/Strategies	Timing	Responsibility	Success criteria
Access to education for Students with Additional Needs	Reviewed ahead of each 01/09 from 2026 and as new joiners arrive	(Heads of DJ, DS AND D6th SENCo)	Students with needs identified to allow provision to be considered • Bespoke screener or review of baseline testing according to year group – meeting with record of minutes and actions to follow up. • This is cross referenced at each review point- at least termly. • Enabling participation in the School's Curriculum for all- train staff on use of iSAMS/CPOMS to improve access of teachers to information.
Resourcing to support access to curriculum & learning	Ongoing from September 2026	Leaders of Learning & Innovation	All learners to have access to devices to facilitate learning As we work towards Apple accredited school Staff training to enable accessibility (Spring 2027) Parent workshops (Spring 2027 onwards and annually)
To introduce a range of assistive technology to support the provision of pupils with disabilities or learning challenges.	Ongoing from Sept 2026	Leaders of Learning & Innovation SLT SENCO IT	In lessons, there will be a range of assistive technology being used from: speech recognition software, screen readers, text to speech. Review Autumn 2026 Begin implementation Spring 2027
The provision of information in simple language, symbols, large print, audio/video form or in Braille for pupils and prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information	From annual review dependent on specific needs of cohorts	SENCO to advise specific teachers	SEN pupils are able to access resources independently. Resources will be available for the individual lessons.
All staff are aware of the content of any current Education and Health Care Plans	Ongoing from 09/2026	SENCO/TEACHERS	All plans are accessible to all staff on iSAMS/TEAMS All plans held in a secure place that known teachers

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			can request to view and read. SENCO/ staff review of EHCP in preparation for the pupil's annual review.
Ensure transportation arrangements are inclusive for all students, including those with physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities.	Ongoing	Operations Manager / SENCO/EVC	All students can access school, curriculum activities, and trips without barriers: - Review transport contracts and create plan for change 2026/27 - Review role of escorts and support staff on trips 2026/27 - Review RA for trips in light of above 2026 - Create action plan for any necessary changes 2026/7

Actions to improve the physical environment to enable those with disability to take better advantage of the education and facilities

Targets/Strategies	Timing	Responsibility	Success criteria
Undertake a full accessibility audit of the site (stairs, corridors, entrances, ramps, toilets, changing facilities and classrooms) to identify and prioritise barriers to access.	Autumn/spring term 2026	Ops Manager	Audit completed and findings used to produce a prioritised works programme.
Provide and maintain clearly signed accessible parking bays close to main entrances.	Reviewed annually; works completed by Summer 2027	Ops Manager	Accessible parking bays are available, compliant and clearly signed at all site entrances.
Ensure step-free routes (via ramps or level access) are available to all essential teaching and communal areas, prioritising works identified in the site audit.	By September 2027	Ops Manager	Step-free access confirmed to all essential areas of the school.
Review and update Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for pupils and staff with mobility or sensory needs, and test emergency escape routes and lighting.	Reviewed annually and on individual need	Head of H&S	PEEPs are in place for all pupils/staff who need them; evacuation drills confirm routes and lighting are effective.
Conduct an accessibility audit of all buildings and outdoor areas	Autumn 2026	Operations Manager	Audit completed and documented, areas for improvement identified
Install visual and tactile signage for key areas (toilets, exits, classrooms)	2027	Facilities Manager	Create priority roll out plan, seek advice on signage types, signage installed
Install evacuation chairs and train staff in their use	Spring 2027	Operations Manager / SLT	Chairs installed, training completed and logged
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Create quiet zones and sensory-friendly spaces for pupils with sensory sensitivities	Summer 2027	SENCO / Inclusion Lead	Spaces created and used effectively. Pupil feedback collected

Actions to improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils, staff, parents and visitors

Targets/Strategies	Timing	Responsibility	Success criteria
Identify and apply for exam access arrangements (extra time, readers, scribes, alternative format papers) in line with JCQ regulations.	Reviewed annually ahead of each exam series	SENCO / Examinations Officer	All eligible pupils have approved access arrangements in place before examinations.
Provide school information in alternative formats (large print, coloured paper, braille, pictorial/symbolic representations) on request.	On request; format list reviewed annually	SENCO	Requests for alternative formats are fulfilled within an agreed timeframe.
Install and maintain induction loops in key communication areas, including reception and the main hall.	By September 2027	Ops Manager	Induction loops are installed, tested and signposted in identified areas.
Review classroom seating plans, lighting and equipment termly to support pupils with sensory or visual impairment.	Termly	SENCO / Class Teachers	Seating and equipment adjustments are documented and reviewed each term.
Train staff on communicating effectively with individuals with sensory or cognitive impairments	Ongoing from 2025	Heads of School/ Inclusion Lead	Training completed and feedback collected
Facilitate interpreters or translation services for key meetings and events	As Needed	Heads of School	Compile list of suitable resources ready to link when need arises
Installation of hearing loop systems in key meeting areas and event spaces	2028	Facilities Manager / IT Manager	Create priority plan, roll out systems installation and maintain
Accessible communication: Add captions to all media material that goes out to stakeholders	2026	Head of marketing	100% of school videos are captioned

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