

The Four Stones Multi Academy Trust

Accessibility Policy

Version Control

Policy author: Chief Operating Officer
Policy approved by: Trust Board
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Version	Date	Details
1.0	12 th July 2021	Re-written as a MAT policy

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1st October 2010 and replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The Four Stones Multi Academy Trust (MAT) has duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people. They **must** make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage. These duties are anticipatory – they require thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage. The MAT also has wider duties to prevent discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.

As a MAT we are committed to providing premises that are suitable and sufficient for all educational purposes and give access to a broad and balanced curriculum for all students, irrespective of special need or disability.

Disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010: 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 provides a relatively low threshold and includes more children than many realise: 'long-term' is defined as 'a year or more' and 'substantial' is defined as 'more than minor or trivial'. This definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and cancer. Children and young people with such conditions do not necessarily have a special educational need (SEN), but there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with a SEN. Where a disabled child or young person requires special educational provision they will also be covered by the SEN definition.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out the legal obligations that MATs have towards disabled children and young people:

- They must not directly or indirectly discriminate against, harass or victimise disabled children and young people.
- They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, to ensure that disabled children and young people are not at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers. This duty is anticipatory. It requires thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage.
- Public bodies, including further education institutions, local authorities, maintained schools, maintained nursery schools, academies and free schools are covered by the public sector equality duty and when carrying out their functions must have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled children and young people.
- They must publish information to demonstrate their compliance with this general duty and must prepare and publish objectives to achieve the core aims of the general duty. Objectives must be specific and measurable. The duties cover discrimination in the provision of services and the provision of education, including admissions and exclusions. All providers must make reasonable adjustments to procedures, criteria and practices and by the provision of auxiliary aids and services.
- MATs must publish accessibility plans setting out how they plan to increase access for disabled pupils to the curriculum, the physical environment and to information.
- MAT Trust Boards and proprietors must also publish information about the arrangements for the admission of disabled children, the steps taken to prevent disabled children being treated less

favourably than others, the facilities provided to assist access of disabled children, and their accessibility plans.

- Where a child or young person is covered by SEN and disability legislation, reasonable adjustments and access arrangements should be considered as part of SEN planning and review. Where MAT trustees are publishing information about their arrangements for disabled children and young people, this should be brought together with the information required under the Children and Families Act 2014.

The accessibility plan identifies the actions the MAT intends to take over a three-year period to increase access for those with a disability in three key areas. This plan sets out the outlined proposal to the trust board to increase access to education for disabled students in those three areas:

1. Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the school curriculum
2. Improving the environment of the school to increase the extent to which disabled students can take advantage of education and associated services
3. Improving the delivery to disabled students of information which is provided in writing for students who are not disabled.

The trust board will review and evaluate this plan annually.

At all times the MAT will also be equally aware of the needs of disabled staff, parents/carers and visitors.

In May 2021, the Trust Estates and Facilities Manager and the relevant Site Manager undertook an 'Accessibility Audit'. The 'Accessibility Audit' considered the physical environment of the schools in the MAT and looked at the following: whether the premises link easily to public transport; if there was disabled parking; whether there was full disability access from outside areas into the building; whether bells/exit buttons were placed appropriately; whether all work areas were accessible; whether the movement around the building was for all users; whether signage was clear; Whether there were adequate disabled toilet facilities; whether there was a provision for visual impairment; Whether there was a provision for hearing impairment; and whether there was an emergency evacuation plan in relation to disabled users. By taking these items into consideration it:

- identifies the necessary adjustments in the service provided to disabled customers to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010;
- recognises the possible obstacles, and devising solutions, to avoid possible litigation by discriminating by way of a worse service to a disabled customer;
- considers existing management and organisation of a building and the service from it, to achieve maximum accessibility;
- enables incorporation of reasonable adjustments on future refurbishment, regular maintenance and budget planning for substantial capital costs;
- helps gain consent for alterations, extensions and new builds in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations; and
- assists application for Lottery, National Heritage and other public funding.