



The Priory School, Hitchin

Excellence in education for every young person, every day

Name of policy	Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan 2026 – 2029
Statutory	Yes
Date policy was updated	Autumn 2026
Date of next review	Autumn 2029
Governors committee	Finances and Resources
Member of staff responsible for the policy	Matt Blayney
Approved by Headteacher for operational implementation on 9th September 2026 Pending formal Governing Body ratification on 13th October 2026.	

Responsibility **Respect** Resilience

The Priory School, Hitchin

Disability Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan 2026 – 2029

1. Introduction

The Priory School, Hitchin (TPSH) is committed to ensuring the fair and equal treatment of all individuals. We welcome applications from people with disabilities to join our school community as students and staff.

Our Equality Policy is in place to ensure that there is no discrimination against any group within our community and we ensure people with disabilities, including parents, carers, and members are fully integrated into school life.

2. Contextual Information

TPSH has an above average proportion of students with disabilities as shown in the data collected by the Department for Education. Students at the school include those with a range of disabilities which include moderate, specific and complex learning disabilities.

This includes students and parents with visual and hearing impairments. We have wheelchair dependent students, parents and visitors. We have students and parents in our community who have complex medical needs.

3. Aims

The aims of the Disability Equality Scheme are to ensure that:

1. Equality of opportunity is promoted between disabled people and other people.
2. Discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 is eliminated.
3. Harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability is eliminated.
4. Positive attitudes towards disabled people are promoted.
5. Participation by disabled people in public life is encouraged.
6. Steps are taken to meet disabled people's needs with a focus on policy and not just the needs of individuals.
7. Applications for admission from all potential students are considered in line with the published admission arrangements.
8. Applications for employment are considered and assessed on the basis of the applicants' aptitudes, abilities and qualifications.
9. Staff with disabilities and students with learning difficulties/disabilities have access to the appropriate support, including the delivery of written information, and adaptations to enable them to be fully included in the life of the school.
10. The views of individual students, staff, parents, visitors, and members of the community are taken into account at all times, including when their requirements are being assessed.
11. All students are fully integrated into the school and individual needs are assessed and supported as far as is practicable within a mainstream educational establishment.
12. Staff working with people with disabilities, either as colleagues or as students, have appropriate information, support and training.
13. Steps are taken to enable staff and students who become disabled during their time at the school to continue in their chosen career or course of study as far as is practicable.

14. Members of the public with disabilities can fully participate in public events held within the school.

The Department for Education has published advice for schools on the Equality Act (2010) which sets out the need for an Accessibility Plan that should be regularly reviewed by the Governing Body.

The Accessibility Plan should show how the school will continue to improve in the following three areas:

1. Increasing the extent to which disabled students can participate in the curriculum.
2. Improving the physical environment of schools to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education and to ensure that they (and other disabled members of the community) can benefit from the facilities and services provided.
3. Improving the accessibility and availability of information to disabled students (also benefitting staff, parents, carers and visitors).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to establish and ratify the policy on Disability Equality, to approve an Accessibility Plan and to monitor the effects of the Scheme and Plan.

It is the responsibility of Headteacher to ensure that:

1. Disabled staff, students and users of the school are not disadvantaged because of their disabilities.
2. Consultations on the development and implementation of the Accessibility Plan will involve interested individuals and groups, including using feedback from parents and students from annual reviews.
3. All breaches of good practice are addressed promptly, using informal procedures where possible but implementing formal procedures where necessary.

It is the responsibility of all staff to familiarise themselves with and comply and implement the Scheme and the Plan in accordance with professional standards.

5. Development of the Scheme and Plan

We will make best use of available expertise: disabled students, their parents, specialist teachers, visiting professionals, and others to help to identify practices and arrangements that act as a barrier to including disabled students.

The Scheme and the associated Accessibility Plan will be informed by students, staff and parents with learning difficulties/disabilities. Their involvement will inform the preparation, development, publication of the Scheme and Plan and the arrangements for the review and reporting on the Scheme and Plan.

It is intended that such involvement should:

1. Provide insights into the barriers faced by students, staff, and parents with learning difficulties/disabilities.
2. Use expertise to identify ways to overcome these barriers.
3. Improve working relationships between TPSH's Governing Body and students, staff and parents with learning difficulties/disabilities.

The involvement of disabled people in drawing up this Scheme, will include the following:

1. Consulting with parents via meetings and surveys.
2. Consulting with students via annual review meetings and pupil panels.
3. Staff questionnaires.

Information will be gathered by:

1. SENCo.
2. Senior Leadership Team.
3. School Business Manager.

The information will influence the Scheme as follows:

Analysis of the information gathered will enable the school to identify the areas of the curriculum which present difficulties for students with learning difficulties/disabilities and whether the physical environment hampers access to the whole life of the school and try to make adjustments accordingly.

6. Implementation

The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) will be responsible for ensuring that staff and parents are made aware of this Policy and that the Disability Code of Practice set out below is followed.

The Headteacher and the Governing Body will have overall responsibility for ensuring that this Policy is implemented.

7. Disability Code of Practice

Environment:

1. We will plan improvements to the physical environment of the premises and physical aids to access education.
2. Any future building projects will be considered at the planning stage for accessibility and usability by people with disabilities.
3. We will take a strategic approach to planning for increased disability access; this might include linking accessibility projects to all other capital building work where appropriate.
4. We will consider where appropriate, accessibility in all purchasing decisions.
5. Evacuation procedures and escape routes will be carefully planned and published for students and staff with disabilities and those who have disabilities who are users of the premises.

Students:

1. Applications will be considered in line with the published admission arrangements for all students. An applicant's learning difficulty/disability will not prevent her/him from being offered a place and being integrated into TPSH unless:
 - a. the content, structure and delivery of the curriculum are such that the student would be prevented from fulfilling a major part of it, or

- b. we would be unable to provide suitably trained staff or facilities to allow the requirements of the National Curriculum to be met.
2. We will aim to provide students with learning difficulties/disabilities the appropriate support to enable them to be fully integrated. We will not treat a student with learning difficulties/disabilities less favourably than any other student and will make reasonable adjustments to ensure the full participation and integration of students with learning difficulties/disabilities.
3. As far as resources allow, the needs of students with learning difficulties/disabilities will be taken into account in the design, structure and flexibility of teaching methods and delivery. Where a curriculum area is organised in such a way that a student with learning difficulties/disabilities cannot fully participate, alternative provision will be made.
4. We will make written information available to disabled students in an appropriate format. The information normally provided by the school to its students will be made available to students with learning difficulties/disabilities, taking account of students' disabilities, students' and parents' preferred formats and be made available within a reasonable time frame.
5. Students with learning difficulties/disabilities or who become disabled whilst studying at TPSH will be given appropriate support from staff to enable them to have equal access to the curriculum. Individual needs will be considered and addressed by all curriculum areas in collaboration with the SENCo and an individual education plan drawn up on an annual basis.
6. The curriculum covers not only teaching and learning but the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after school clubs, leisure, sporting and cultural activities or school visits. Curriculum access will be considered at a 'whole school' level as many barriers to access to the curriculum will be similar for many groups of students and it is helpful to take a strategic approach to removing those barriers.
7. We recognise that special arrangements may be required to enable students with learning difficulties/disabilities, including specific learning difficulties, to exhibit their capabilities and knowledge. Special arrangements will be made to enable such students to perform to the best of their ability by meeting their individual needs. For example, we will liaise with the relevant examination boards in such instances. Students and parents will be made fully aware of the process for making special arrangements for assessment and examinations by the SENCo in liaison with specific curriculum managers and the school's Examinations Officer.

Staff:

1. In gathering information on the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees we will include all those working at TPSH in whatever capacity, including those who are working under contract.
2. Policies on phased return to work after sickness, sick leave and monitoring may be relevant for disabled staff and reference should be made to the Sickness Absence Policy
3. Wherever practicable, we will:
 - a. consider and seek to employ people with disabilities in jobs suited to their aptitudes, abilities and qualifications in line with the Equality Act 2010.

- b. ensure that employees with disabilities are considered for promotion according to their aptitudes, abilities and qualifications.
- c. ensure that employees with disabilities are not disadvantaged when the renewal of fixed-term contracts is being considered.

Members of staff who become disabled should continue, so far as is practicable and dependant on their ability to carry out the duties of their post, to be employed by the school at the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body. Help from related professional organisations should be sought when considering not only the possible effects of the disability but also other consequential disadvantages, such as loss of status or financial loss.

We will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments to enable the employee to continue in post. Options might include:

- continuing in the same post
- a gradual return to work
- a reduction in hours
- redeployment

In certain circumstances it might be necessary to consider:

- premature retirement on grounds of incapacity
- termination of employment

In cases where a disability is a degenerative or a progressive condition, careful consideration would be given to the selection of the most appropriate option(s).

We will make reasonable changes to work practices and where possible within the workplace, to enable people with disabilities including those members of staff who become disabled whilst employed, to work successfully.

We will ensure that a programme of training is offered to staff to increase the awareness of students with learning difficulties/disabilities and inform them of appropriate action to be taken when delivering the curriculum. Learning Support Assistants will support teaching staff as required to help ensure that students with learning difficulties/disabilities have equal access to the curriculum. People being provided with goods, facilities and services, including non-educational services.

We will make adjustments for a disabled parent, carer, Governor or other person using the school by:

- altering policies, practices and procedures where necessary - e.g. allowing guide dogs into the school.
- providing auxiliary aids and services - e.g. providing a sign language interpreter for a deaf parent attending a parents' evening.
- removing or altering physical features - e.g. where the school's hall is used for plays and other events using a loop system and improving the acoustics for people with hearing impairments; installing and maintaining lifts to enable disabled people to access community provision.
- providing a reasonable alternative method, or the manner in which it provides a service, - e.g. meeting with a disabled parent in a downstairs room.

8. Arrangements for collecting information

1. We will promote the breadth of the definition of disability and of the people who are likely to be included in this definition.
2. We will gather and analyse information on;
 - a. the effect of our policies on the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees.
 - b. the educational opportunities available to, and the achievements of, disabled students.
 - c. the arrangements for using information to support the review of the Action Plan and to inform subsequent schemes by means of:
 - i) analysis of recruitment data and retention data
 - ii) analysis of student achievement
 - iii) Student progress meetings
 - iv) IEP Reviews
3. We will:
 - a. explain why information is needed.
 - b. reassure students, staff and parents about confidentiality.
 - c. ensure that the ethos of TPSH is conducive to disclosure.
 - d. We will seek to collect information on other disabled people using its facilities and services, to show how it is promoting disability equality for disabled people.

9. Publication

This Scheme together with the Accessibility Plan is available for anyone asking for a copy and will be published on the school website. We are prepared to provide this in alternative formats.

10. Monitoring and Review

1. We will adopt a planned approach, over the lifetime of the Scheme, to assessing the impact of its current policies on disability equality. As the school develops its approach, assessing the impact of policies on disability equality will become part of our approach to the review and development of all policies. As new policies are developed, their impact on disability equality will be considered from the outset.
2. We will provide information on its Accessibility Plans to meet any requirements of funding agreements.
3. In the annual report on the Accessibility Plan the school will report on the progress it has made on its Accessibility Action Plan, and the effect of what it has done. We will review and revise the Scheme and Plan every three years.

The Headteacher will report to the Governors' Finance and Resources Committee on any relevant aspects of the working of the Scheme and Plan as appropriate.

Accessibility Plan

Schools are required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an Accessibility Plan.

The purpose of the plan is to:

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

- Improve the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

We aim to treat all our pupils fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all pupils without discrimination of any kind.

We are committed to ensuring staff are trained in equality issues with reference to the Equality Act (2010), including understanding disability issues.

We support and seek any available partnerships to develop and implement the Plan.

Our school's complaints procedure covers the Accessibility Plan. If you have any concerns relating to accessibility in school, this procedure sets out the process for raising these concerns.

Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act (2010) defines an individual as disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on his or her ability to undertake normal day to day activities.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, 'long-term' is defined as 'a year or more' and 'substantial' is defined as 'more than minor or trivial'. The definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for pupils with disabilities under the Equality Act (2010), to alleviate any substantial disadvantage that a disabled pupil faces in comparison with non-disabled pupils. This can include, for example, the provision of an auxiliary aid or adjustments to premises.

Planning Duty 1: Curriculum

Current good practice, including the progress made across the last Accessibility Plan:

- We have established excellent collaboration and communication with local schools and with families.
- Our planning processes support staff to understand needs and meet them effectively.
- Staff receive regular CPD, focusing on how to effectively adapt curriculum and teaching approaches to meet student needs.
- Our recent Herts for Learning (HFL) SEND review along with our Self Evaluation, regular Learning Walks, book scrutinies, student voice, parental communication (including meetings and surveys) and data analyses are triangulated to consider how pupils are accessing the curriculum and what further additional support or adaption might be required.
- Where needed, swift action is taken to adapt provision / provide reasonable adjustments to optimise access to the curriculum.
- Our curriculum is always under review, with a focus on developing a curriculum for all and promoting inclusion. We make bespoke arrangements, including using alternative qualifications and programmes are offered at KS4 for students for whom GCSEs might not be appropriate.
- We have close collaboration with external agencies and professionals.
- All trips and out of school activities are planned to ensure they are accessible and inclusive.
- Technology is utilised effectively to support assessment and access to the curriculum.
- Our pastoral team and our well-being team support students with SEMH needs.
- Teaching Assistants have subject specialisms and have also had the opportunity for enhanced training in specific areas of need.
- We have a named member of the Learning Support team employed as a KS4/5 transition lead to ensure students are aware of all of their options and are supported to make appropriate applications.
- Support to ensure excellent transition for all students is led by a named member of the Learning Support team and the relevant SENCo.

Accessibility Action Plan for Curriculum 2026-2029

Objective	Actions	Person/Team responsible
To ensure that all staff adapt the curriculum appropriately to meet the needs of individual students and continue to develop their knowledge and confidence in adaptive practice.	Develop our SEND interventions planning report and re-launch in September 2026. Continue training on adaptive practice	KEM/NPA/FRO Learning Support Team and Teaching and learning team.
To develop our support in and outside the classroom for pupils with SEMH needs.	Continue TPP training and demonstrate how this links to our behaviour policies.	COR and Wellbeing Team.
Continue to broaden levels of support for students with ASD, including within the Sixth Form.	Offer CPD on ASC and what it is but extend this to include traits in those undiagnosed and other conditions which present similarly.	KEM
Continue to ensure and develop excellent transition arrangements	Continue to meet and work closely with post 16 and primary providers.	KEM/SHA
Continue to develop support for CEIAG and progression	CEIAG appointments for all students and meaningful Raising Aspirations inputs from Year 7.	SEM

Continue to ensure that all pupils can access opportunities outside of the classroom	All trips/extra-curricular opportunities continue to be checked by SENCos to ensure students can access fully. Subject specific TAs to attend relevant curriculum trips to support learning.	KEM
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Planning Duty 2: Physical Environment

Current good practice, including the progress made across the last Accessibility Plan

- The environment is adapted to meet the needs of pupils as required. This includes:
 - a. Ramps
 - b. Elevators
 - c. Corridor width
 - d. Disabled parking bays
 - e. Disabled toilets and changings rooms
 - f. Dropped kerbs
 - g. Lowered reception desk
 - h. Lifts

Since the last review we have also:

- a. Established the Learning Support Hub and Wellbeing spaces as a quiet space to support students with SEMH, mental health concerns and those who are anxious school refusers (Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA)).
- b. Improved site accessibility for those with visual disabilities by adding further dropped kerbs, and new flooring in the pastoral corridor and A corridor.
- c. External posts and bollards have coloured strips on and external steps and other potential hazards for those visual impairment have been painted yellow.
- d. Ensured new 3G pitch is accessible.

Accessibility Action Plan for Curriculum 2026-2029

Objective	Actions	Person/Team responsible
Repair lifts in B block	Assess repair possibility or replacements	KJE
Ensure members of the community can access education at TPSH.	Ensure appropriate advice is sought and followed for individuals where specific adaptations are required.	KEM

Planning Duty 3: Information

Current good practice, including the progress made across the last Accessibility Plan

We ensure that all written information that is normally provided to students is provided in accessible formats, to meet needs.

All policies reflect our inclusive practice and procedures.

Specialist advice is sought from the LA where required.

Meetings with families are warm and supportive and encourage the sharing of information and give an opportunity for any questions to be answered.

Accessibility Action Plan for Curriculum 2026-2029

Objective	Actions	Person/Team responsible
Continue to offer a variety of ways for parents to engage with school.	Consult with parents around workshops based on themes.	KEM/MBL
Continue to ensure parents and visitors are aware of who they can contact about any additional support required to access the school and school events.	Ensure this is flagged in induction sessions for all trainees, and that it is shared in letters home inviting parents into school or to parents' evenings etc.	KEM/MBL