

DOWNSIDE

SCHOOL

LEARNING SUPPORT, DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Aims

- to support the best practice in the recognition and management of special educational needs
- to afford opportunity to employees and pupils who are disabled;
- to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 ('SENDA');
- to have regard to the guidance issued by the Disability Rights Commission 'Code of Practice for Schools'.

LEARNING SUPPORT

Definition of Special Educational Needs & Learning Difficulty

(as stated in the SEN Code of Practice section 1:3)

Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Children have a learning difficulty if they:

a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or

b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority.

Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught.

'Learning difficulty'.

This covers a wide range of conditions, permanent or temporary. It may include specific learning difficulties i.e. dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit & hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorders, eyesight or hearing disorders. It may also include learning difficulties resulting from emotional or behavioural problems. Learning difficulties affect pupils with both high and lower IQ's and academic ability.

'Learning Support'

We do not wish to exclude from the provisions of this policy those pupils who may find a particular subject or topic within a subject difficult. The school provides subject clinics and the Learning Support Department has three 'drop-in' sessions during the week. In addition, pupils are encouraged to speak to the Department at other times to discuss their work.

Statement

Provision

We provide support for pupils who appear to have a learning difficulty, often in the form of remedial teaching based on a current educational psychologist's report and, in addition, our own assessment. On discovery of previously unknown problems, the pupil will be referred to an educational psychologist for detailed assessment.

Consultation

We will report and consult with parents about any learning difficulties their children may have. We will also notify subject teachers, especially where specific strategies would improve the learning environment for a pupil. In some instances it is appropriate to inform the pupil's tutor.

Implementation

1. Formal Assessment will be carried out by an educational psychologist and we would expect parents to agree to follow the recommendations in the report. It is a matter of parental choice which psychologist assesses their child and the cost of the consultation is the responsibility of the parent.
2. Learning support lessons in school on a one to one basis may be recommended as an appropriate form of support. This will normally be one thirty-five minute lesson per week, although some pupils may require more remedial teaching. The cost of these lessons is added to the pupil's school bill as an extra. The lessons are normally set up for an academic year.
3. We expect parents of pupils with special needs to provide a copy of any report or assessment carried out at the pupil's previous school when they join Downside.
4. The school's Learning Support Coordinator is responsible for the following:
 - ensuring that appropriate IEP's are in place,
 - ensuring that there is liaison with parents, the school and any other professional in respect of the pupil's special educational needs.
5. Pupils who have a diagnosed learning difficulty may be eligible for an award of extra time in examinations. Pupils are asked to speak to their House Master/Mistress as early as possible in the Michaelmas term
6. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and who meet the School's admissions criteria academically will have appropriate support provided.

DISABILITY

Disability

A disability is a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial, long-term, adverse effect on day-to-day activity' (**Disability Discrimination Act 1995**).

By way of further explanation:

- physical disability includes medical conditions for which a person needs to use a wheelchair, for example, cerebral palsy or brittle bones.
- a mental impairment is a recognised mental illness which has been diagnosed, a severe learning difficulty or a psychiatric illness.
- 'long-term' means a period of 12 months or longer.
- an 'adverse effect on day-to-day activity' means having a 'significant and material' effect on the following: mobility; manual dexterity; physical co-ordination; continence; ability to lift, carry or move every-day objects; speech, hearing or eyesight; memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; and perception of the risk of physical dangers.

Other conditions which may amount to disability include:

- severe disfigurements, scarring conditions and birthmarks;
- progressive conditions which will result in a substantial long-term adverse effect on day-to-day activity;
- a controlled impairment, i.e., a person with a prosthesis, or a person with drug-controlled epilepsy or diabetes;
- a history of impairment, for example a person who used to be disabled and has recovered, such as, a person with a previous mental illness.

Disability does not include:

- hay fever sufferers;
- a person with anti-social tendencies and/or abusive behaviour,
- a person diagnosed as HIV-positive, until they exhibit physical symptoms or related conditions;
- a person who has a behavioural difficulty, for a reason other than a disability, for example, arising from social or domestic circumstances;
- a person who is addicted to nicotine, alcohol and other non-prescribed substances.

Statement

Downside School (**Downside**) will:

- maintain and drive a positive culture towards inclusion of disabled people in all the activities of Downside.
- train staff to understand the types of disabilities and how to deal with employees and pupils who are disabled. Staff will not be expected, unless medically qualified, to administer medication.
- adopt user-friendly procedures for considering admissions from parents of disabled children, being prepared to make reasonable adjustments in the admissions process where appropriate.
- implement and review the Accessibility Plan with the aim of increasing the accessibility of Downside's curriculum, and to improve the physical environment of Downside and to improve access to information for our employees, pupils and prospective pupils.
- keep under review Downside's Admission Policy, Equal Opportunities

and Anti-Bullying policies in line with SENDA.

Implementation

Disability discrimination

We will not treat a pupil or employee or a prospective pupil or employee less favourably on the grounds of disability unless it is necessary and justified in all the circumstances.

We will not knowingly discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability:

- in the arrangements for determining admission or employment procedures;
- in the terms on which a place at Downside is offered;
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for admission or employment;
- in the provision of education and associated services;
- by excluding a person on the grounds of their disability;
- by victimising a person with a disability;
- by failing to take steps to ensure that disabled persons are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled persons.

Admission procedure for pupils

Downside will be open to applications from any prospective pupil with a physical and/or mental impairment. The registration or admission form will enable the parents to give details of their child's disability. Every application will be considered on its merits within Downside's criteria for selection on grounds of the student's ability and aptitude in a fair, open-minded way.

Downside will, if appropriate, request from the parents or previous school full details in the form of medical reports, educational psychologist reports and any other report which assesses the child's disability so that Downside can make an assessment of the adjustments that would be needed in order to provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs.

Applications will be considered on the basis that all "**reasonable adjustments**" have been made by Downside in order to cater for the child's disability. (See definition below.)

Downside will not offer a place if, after all reasonable adjustments have been made, Downside will be unable to provide adequately for the pupil's physical and educational needs.

Downside will inform the parents of their decision and give details of the reasonable adjustments they are going to make or give reasons why the offer of the place is declined.

Education and associated services

Downside has an on-going duty to make reasonable adjustment in respect of the education and associated services provided. This is a broad expression that covers all aspects of School life.

The range of activities that are covered by the expression include:

- the curriculum;
- classroom organisation and timetabling;
- access to School facilities;
- School sports;
- School policies;
- breaks and lunchtimes; the serving of School meals;
- assessment and examination arrangements;
- School discipline and sanctions;
- exclusion procedures;
- School clubs, educational visits and other activities;
- preparation of pupils for the next phase of education.

Reasonable adjustments for pupils

Downside is legally required to make 'reasonable adjustments' in order to cater for a child's disability. Downside is not legally required to supply auxiliary aids or services or to make any alterations to the physical features of Downside.

Downside shall inform the pupils and parents of the reasonable adjustments that the School is legally required to make for that pupil, which may typically include making arrangements for a child in a wheelchair to attend an interview in an accessible ground floor room;

- allowing extra time for a dyslexic child to complete an entrance exam;
- providing examination papers in larger print for a child with a visual impairment;

- rearranging the timetable to allow a student to attend a class in an accessible part of the building;
- arranging a variety of accessible sports activities.

Downside is not legally required to make adjustments which include:

- physical alterations such as the provision of a stair-lift or new ground floor facilities;
- auxiliary aids and services such as a loop for children with hearing aids; large LCD screen computers and disability trained classroom assistants.

If parents are willing to pay for auxiliary aids and services, Downside will carefully consider any proposals and will not unreasonably refuse any requests for such aids and services to be provided.

Disclosure

Parents will be requested to provide Downside with copies of the child's latest medical report, educational psychologist's report and any other information regarding the child's disability.

If, following the offer of the place, it is discovered that Downside has not received full disclosure of information relating to the child's disability **and** Downside is not able to make reasonable adjustments for those disabilities, then the School may withdraw the offer of a place, or ask the parents to withdraw a child who is already a pupil.

Review procedure

Parents may request a review if Downside decides it is unable to offer their child a place on the grounds of disability. The request must be made as soon as possible and in any event within seven days of the decision being notified to the parents. The Head Master or Deputy Head Master will advise as to the procedure under which such a review will be conducted.

Introduction

Downside has prepared an Accessibility Plan which is available, on request, to all parents and staff.

The Accessibility Plan includes consideration of how Downside proposes to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in Downside's curriculum;
- improve the physical environment of Downside for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and associated service;
- improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils which is usually provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled.

The plan will be reviewed every year, to ensure that the Plan is up-to-date and covers all aspects of School life

Awareness and observance of the Policy

The Senior Management Team will be responsible for the overall implementation of this Policy and ensure that staff are given the appropriate general training and guidance. Staff will also be given accurate information about the specific disabilities of an individual pupil.

Background Information

Downside Abbey and School are housed in magnificent buildings set in a 500 acre estate on the eastern edge of the Mendip Hills, twelve miles south of the city of Bath. The oldest building on the site, The Old House – formerly known as Mount Pleasant –, dates from the 18th century; the most recent, Isabella House, was completed in 2007. The Abbey Church, partly designed by Giles Gilbert Scott, lies at the heart of the School. The Upper School is centred round the main quadrangle at the southern end of the site. The larger part of Downside School was grade II* listed in 1961 with amendments in 1989.

Although there remains a very close relationship between the Monastery and School, there is a clear division between the two. The Monastery comprises the Abbey Church, the private quarters, guest wing and library. Admission to the private quarters and study facilities is strictly controlled. The School facilities are far more open in comparison to the Monastery.

The School has excellent teaching, boarding and recreational facilities. There are purpose-built centres for the Sciences and Humanities, dedicated Music and Arts Schools, a 600 seat theatre, a comprehensive swimming-pool and sports complex, over 100 acres of playing fields with all weather hockey, netball and tennis courts, seven distinctive girls and boys boarding-houses, including facilities for day pupils, and extensive buildings and classrooms set in grounds and farmland. All the Houses at Downside have undergone extensive refurbishment and are equipped with modern kitchens, private changing and showering areas and comfortable common rooms. All boarders have individual rooms from the Fifth Form.

The pupils of both Junior and Senior Schools are required to gain access to a number of different classrooms, often in different buildings, on a regular basis each day. Given the number of historic buildings within the school and the requirement for pupils to move around the site, it is conceivable that a pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these problems, if not prohibited altogether from access to some of the facilities that the school offers. It is not feasible for reasonable adjustments to be made to the historic buildings since such major alterations to the physical features, even if permitted by planning regulations, would be cost prohibitive.

Downside's strategy is to continue to develop new buildings and facilities for both classroom teaching and pastoral care which will allow disabled access. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Downside Masterplan which sets in context the architectural significance of the various buildings and their landscape setting. It illustrates a space audit study and sets out in general terms the anticipated future requirements for the School and Monastic Community.

Building Development Plan

In the last five years, the following buildings have been modified or built and facilitate disabled access:

- Caverel Boarding House
- Isabella Boarding House
- Swimming Pool
- Pastoral Centre

There are currently no new developments planned but any future works will consider DDA requirements.

Current Provision

An accessibility review is detailed below and includes key buildings within the School site and any accessibility / remedial action required.

Plunkett House– Junior School

Plunkett House, for first and second Form boys and girls, is focused around St Benedicts Church on the Fosseway. It comprises two Edwardian properties called Ramsay and Ullathorne set a little apart from Downside Senior School on either side of Abbey Road. Girls are accommodated in Ramsay and the boys in Ullathorne.

Accommodation and washing facilities are located on the ground floor but adjustments would need to be made to provide an accessible toilet and shower room in each House. Meals are taken in the School Main Refectory and access is available to disabled pupils via the East Wing access but not via the internal route from classrooms due to steps in a number of the corridors.

The classrooms are located on the ground floor in the Senior School and are accessible to disabled pupils.

However, due to fire and H&S regulations, it would not be feasible at the present time to accommodate a physically disabled pupil in these houses.

Senior School

The main School comprises a number of buildings from the mid 19th Century to the latest development in 2008.

Third Form (Year 9) girls join Caverel or Isabella House, for girls aged 13 to 18. Both the girls' houses are DDA compliant with bedrooms, wash facilities and platform lifts which allow disabled girls to be accommodated.

Third-Form (Year 9) boys spend one year in a separate house, Powell House, before moving up to one of three senior boy's Houses: Barlow, Roberts or Smythe, for their four senior years.

Powell House has a ground floor dormitory and, with the addition of ramps and adapted washing facilities, it would be possible to make this area accessible. There is an accessible

single room with private washing facilities situated off the main corridor which could be used by a physically disabled male pupil.

The senior boys houses are multi-storied without lift access. Due to fire and H&S regulations, it would not be feasible at the present time to accommodate a physically disabled pupil within the main boys' houses.

Many of the teaching classrooms are located on the ground floor with some subjects being taught on the first floor. Physically disabled pupils could be taught in the downstairs classrooms and the School would consider taking all reasonable steps to make alterations to the timetable to facilitate the teaching of necessary subjects in downstairs classrooms. Additional ramps may also be required for access to areas such as the Science classrooms, IT, Mathematics and Modern Languages but access to some areas such as Art, English, History and Music would be restricted.

The School's approach is to respond to an individual pupil's requirements as they arise rather than make anticipatory changes as it is recognised that the needs of each pupil will differ depending upon age and the level of physical disability.

School Pastoral Care

The School relies on a system of boarding and day houses to meet pastoral and tutorial needs. As many of these are housed in the historic buildings, the School may of necessity need to limit the choice of "House" available to male pupils suffering from a physical disability to the following:-

- Boys Boarding – Powell House and single room in the main school
- Boys Day – Powell House

The Director of Pastoral Care in conjunction with other relevant senior members of staff will consider the particular needs of a disabled pupil. His or her House Master or House Mistress and Tutors would be made fully aware of their needs and would work closely with others within the School for support, such as the Health Centre.

Parents would be encouraged to discuss any welfare needs with the School to ensure that these are, where possible, fully met. Where appropriate the normal monitoring system for new pupils may be extended.

Any issues or complaints should be addressed in the first instance to the Director for Pastoral Care.

The Health Centre

The Health Centre, situated in its own building at the heart of the School, is staffed 24 hours a day by a team of fully qualified nurses who deal with all aspects of primary care. Doctors provide weekday surgeries with appointments possible at any time when necessary.

Each pupil is given a medical examination and is provided with routine check-ups and immunisations. Regular advice and support is offered by the Health Centre and pupils are also encouraged to use the services of external counsellors if necessary.

Ground floor rooms are available and a physically disabled pupil could, if necessary, be accommodated in the Health Centre.

Recreational and Sports Facilities

The School is committed to ensuring that disabled pupils are fully included within the recreational activities and sports programme. However, access to some facilities may be difficult for certain pupils.

Pupils in wheelchairs can gain access to the Sports Hall but the upper Fitness / Gym area would be inaccessible. Access to the swimming pool is suitable for physically disabled and wheelchair bound pupils. Teaching methods could be adapted to enable pupils to participate at an appropriate level.

For contact sports such as rugby it is deemed to be unsafe for disabled pupils to participate.

It is school policy that all pupils are encouraged to attend and take part in a variety of adventurous activity and residential camps, including Downside's CCF. Both on site and at external venues it may be reasonable to adapt the programme of activities to facilitate participation regardless of disability. The school is also a strong advocate of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and are aware that it gives specific guidance to enable disabled pupils to achieve awards.

Where an activity takes place on site but at a distance from the school, it may not be practicable for a particular pupil to engage in that activity. However, the school will give consideration to rearranging venues if this could help resolve a specific difficulty.

Provision for impaired sight

The School IT provision is fully integrated into classrooms and most classrooms have projectors or interactive white boards. The use of this IT allows images to be enlarged for pupils with a sight impediment. Larger print course notes and examination papers will also be introduced as and when required.

Provision for impaired hearing

The provision of hearing loops has been considered but with the geographical and dispersed nature of the classrooms, it is not financially viable to install such a system.

Access for parents

The following measures are in place to assist parents with disabilities:-

- The School will allow upon request vehicle access through the school grounds to facilitate access to key public buildings.
- Permanent ramps are available to access the main buildings and designated disabled parking is marked.
- Reports can be sent out in large print or in an audible format for parents.

Policy reviewed August 2011 and confirmed as the current Policy

Dom Leo Maidlow Davis