



Downside School Accessibility Plan

This Accessibility Plan covers the period from October 2017 – October 2020

Downside School understands that this is a regulatory policy. This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed regularly by governors – at least annually – and will be amended as necessary according to the latest statutory guidance and advice. The governing body recognises its responsibility to implement its Accessibility Plan.

It is the School's policy to promote equal opportunities. The School is opposed to any form of discrimination on the grounds of sex, disability, race, religion and belief, colour, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, nationality, age, ethnic or national origin, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity. The School has a Christian ethos, following the Benedictine tradition, but welcomes staff and pupils from different ethnic groups, backgrounds and creeds, subject to the provisions of the 'Designation of Schools Having a Religious Character (Independent Schools) (England) (No.3) Order 2003'. Everyone's human rights and freedoms are respected. We have limited facilities for the disabled but we are committed to doing our best to make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate the needs of members of staff and pupils who have disabilities.

Admission to the School depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the criteria required in terms of the general educational and general standards for all its pupils, as commensurate with the ethos to which the School aspires. The School must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, so that there is every chance that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful school career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at the School.

The School's policy is to apply these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability in accordance with the 'Equality Act 2010'.

The School asks parents to complete a registration form in respect of a prospective pupil at the time of application. This form asks parents to provide details of any medical conditions or disabilities their child has for which we may be required to make reasonable adjustments in the event that their child attends the School for interview, examination or visit. A meeting between the parents and Registrar can be arranged to discuss specific access requirements if needed. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the School may take advice and require such assessments as it regards as appropriate. Subject to this, the school will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

Downside School does not discriminate against any pupils, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, taking account of their cultural background, linguistic background, special educational need, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or academic or sporting ability. These factors are taken into account in the care of boarders, so that care is sensitive to different needs.

One of the obvious problems which the School has is its lay-out which covers a wide area and consists of many separate and listed buildings of several stories and without lifts, which have grown up since the School was founded. Another is the system, again common to many schools, of having fixed classrooms for each subject, based on the valid ground of having all the facilities for one subject in one place. This requires pupils to go from classroom to classroom, often up steps or stairs in buildings without lifts. The boarding facilities pose similar problems in a greater degree. It is not hard to conclude that any pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these constraints, if not prohibited altogether from access to some or all of the educational and other facilities the School offers. Nor can these matters be remedied in any substantial way by reasonable adjustments short of making major alterations to physical features of the School at prohibitive cost. Whilst consideration is taken in all building refurbishments and new buildings of the potential needs of probable pupils with disabilities, budgetary considerations must also be taken into account. Even the fruition of long-term plans can only go some way to ameliorate the position. Some of these considerations can potentially be mitigated through the use of a 'buddy' system with a more able bodied pupil, the suitability for which can be assessed at the time by reference to individual circumstances.

The School's Senior Leadership Team reviews the school's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect pupils and prospective pupils who are disabled.

The School's Estate department also reviews accessibility issues when progressing minor works and accessibility issues are considered when planning all new major building projects.

Admissions

The School's admissions literature, policy, examinations and procedures (including access to scholarships and bursaries) includes a question on the registration form (to be treated as confidential if the applicant or parents require) giving the School details of the nature and effect of any disability so as to enable it to consider any adjustments it might need to make. Where such a disability is identified, a further discussion is held with the parents in person and a review or meeting held with the Head of Learning Support if required. All situations are considered individually.

Adjustments which can be, and have been, made available to prospective pupils for entrance exams include the use of laptop computers, additional examination time and the provision of a 'reader' or scribe. The location of the entrance tests is on the ground floor and which is accessible via a ramp at the main School Reception entrance door. Information can be provided to parents and pupils in an enlarged format on request or electronically. Meetings can also be arranged where information can be read out for those needing to lip read.

Boarding facilities

The School has considered these areas and noted the following issues:

Many of the bedrooms are situated on the first floor or above. However, there is a dormitory on the ground floor of Powell House, the junior House for boys, which is accessible via a ramp. Powell House also has a fully accessible, designated room with disabled washrooms and facilities off the main school corridor with access to Powell dormitories via a ramp. Isabella House, one of the girls' Houses (Years 7-13), is fitted with a lift from the ground floor which enables access to bedrooms and it has a bedroom and bathroom suitable for disability access. Caverel House, another girls' House (Years 9-13), also has a lift which can be accessed on the lower ground floor. There is also a bedroom and bathroom suitable for disability access. All boarding accommodation in Smythe and Roberts Houses, senior boys' Houses (Years 10-13), is situated on the first floor or above which is only accessible via the stairs.

Health Centre

Disabled access is only possible from an external ground floor entrance, and there is a lift in the Health Centre if access to the top floor is required. The School has a fully equipped Health Centre which is staffed by qualified nurses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during term time. The School also has the services of a local medical practice and GP surgeries are held three times a week at School. The GPs and nursing staff are experienced in caring for pupils with a wide variety of medical needs including diabetes, asthma, and mental health conditions. The School also employs a qualified Human Givens Therapist, who sees pupils who are either referred to her or on a 'self-referral, drop-in' basis.

Education

The School has considered the problems of physical access caused by the fixed classroom system identified above but would potentially be able to overcome this through adjustment to the timetable for all core subjects (noting that unique rooms such as the library cannot be changed in the medium term).

Non-mobility related disabilities have also been considered including the following:

Dyslexia and other learning difficulties:

The School has a long established learning support department with specialist teachers who are able to support pupils with dyslexia and other related specific learning difficulties. Curriculum changes can also be made to facilitate pupils with special needs such as the option to drop Latin in favour of additional Study Support / Learning Support. However the School curriculum is an academic one, particularly in the sixth form where A Levels are studied. The School recognises that pupils with severe learning support needs may have significant difficulty accessing the curriculum and so a detailed review is undertaken before admission including input from educational psychologists. This is to ensure that any pupil attending the School will be able to access the curriculum and to progress well. Staff training is provided to all teachers periodically at staff induction / inset days.

Hearing impaired: A pupil with impaired hearing would be able to attend the school and would be able to wear hearing aids. The School would adapt teaching practices to cater for his/her needs in the classroom. A safety protocol would also need to be drawn up to assist his/her evacuation in the event of a fire as he may not have heard the siren. Consideration could be given to a 'standalone' hearing loop could be installed in individual classrooms if needed. Consideration could be given to installing a hearing loop in the Abbey Church and elsewhere in the School.

Sight impaired: The issues surrounding Braille teaching resources and notices, including fire and other safety notices have been considered as have been the safety issues of a pupil with significant sight impairment in science laboratories on the site. The cost of making the necessary physical and staffing changes which would be required were deemed cost-prohibitive in the foreseeable future. However, teaching resources can be prepared in large font size and enlarged computer screens provided where needed. A buddy system should be contemplated as the need arises.

Timetabling: Where a pupil is unable to cope with the length of the School day, reasonable adjustments can be made to enable him or her to leave early or arrive later in the morning. This will not affect his or her ability to access all his subjects. He/she will also be able to board on certain nights and go home on other nights if this is deemed appropriate.

Groupings of pupils: In most subjects, pupils are taught in mixed ability groups and the emphasis is on inclusion.

Prep: Prep for those in Third Form – Sixth Form takes place in the boarding houses. Third and Fourth Form pupils are overseen by prefects under the supervision of a duty member of staff. Junior pupils do their prep in the New Classroom Block under the direct supervision of a member of staff. Those who require support for their learning can go to the Fäsenfeld Centre. This room is on the ground floor which means it is accessible to pupils who are unable to access the New Classrooms which are on the top floor. There are rooms available on the ground floor which offer access to computers and internet resources. Pupils can also access the internet on personal devices through the School's Wi-Fi. Reasonable adjustments can be made to the length of time spent doing prep in any given session in order to accommodate a pupil's special needs.

School discipline and sanctions: Disciplinary sanctions such as detentions and gatings can be carried out in large ground floor rooms, which are accessible to all. Reasonable adjustments can be made to the nature of the sanctions depending on the disability of the pupil.

Examinations: Pupils benefit from the same access arrangements in internal and external examinations, provided that the relevant medical or psychological evidence is supplied. In addition and to ensure that the provision is appropriate, all pupils are screened for learning disabilities at both the 11+ and 13+ entrance point.

Preparation for Higher Education: At the request of the pupil, details of provision and access arrangements can be supplied to institutions of Higher Education, thereby ensuring continuity of provision.

Recreational Activities

Access to the majority of the recreation spaces is possible from the ground floor.

Access to the theatre and music rooms is possible from the ground floor and there is space for wheelchairs in the auditorium of the theatre.

The Sports Hall is located on the ground floor, and can be accessed easily but the weights gyms are in old squash courts and can only be accessed by the use of a number of steps. The access to the Gym has a step. A ramp could be installed for wheel-chair access. Changing facilities for both boys and girls are available on the ground floor in the Sports Hall in the swimming pool area.

Swimming Pool

The swimming pool and the changing room areas can be accessed on the ground floor via a ramp. There is currently no lowering lift or other physical device for accessing the water.

Sporting Education and Activities

The curriculum at Downside includes a high emphasis on sports including rugby, football, cricket, hockey, netball and tennis. Safety considerations would need to be taken into account when deciding whether it was compatible with the safety of the individual and group to allow a pupil with mobility disabilities or impaired sight to participate.

The Cricket Pavilion

The pavilion has disabled washrooms on the ground floor, and general access on the ground floor. Boys changing rooms are on the ground floor, but girls changing rooms are on the first floor where there is no wheelchair access

Trips and visits

All pupils are encouraged to take part in educational visits and trips abroad. Where necessary, learning support assistants or parents may accompany the trip to support pupils with particular difficulties. Reasonable adjustments to the trip are made where necessary. These are written into the risk assessment. For example, parents may be asked to collect their children early if the trip is deemed to be too long for certain pupils.

Welfare

The School has a strong Christian ethos and places great importance on teaching pupils to treat each other with respect in harmony with the 'Every Child Matters' agenda for pupil welfare. It actively encourages pupils to work with children with disabilities through its work at Fossey School and with the elderly through supporting the old people's home, Fosse House. With this background, whilst issues such as bullying and non-integration can never be ruled out, pupils take seriously their responsibility to treat one another kindly. House Masters and House Mistresses pay special attention to the integration of pupils with any kind of disability and any mistreatment is dealt with, in line with the 'School Behaviour Policy'.

Eating

The School will ensure that appropriate measures are put in place for any pupil who requires assistance to eat.

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Improving the Physical Access at Downside School

An Access Audit was carried out by the Head of Building & Engineering (Tan Tootill) in October 2017 and a number of recommendations made:

Present position	Objectives	Action required	Timescale
Theatre: No disabled lavatory	Improve facilities for pupils, staff and visitors	Create compatible facilities when next major refurbishment takes place, including construction of disabled lavatory	Completed Summer 2016/17
Sports Hall: No lift to Balcony for spectators	Improve access and availability of facilities for pupils, staff & visitors	Monitor in case further action required	Ongoing
There is direct access to poolside and disabled changing facilities but no specific provision to access the water itself	Possible improved access to pool itself	Consider installing lowering lift	Ongoing
Pavilion does not have wheelchair access to first floor for girls changing	Provide changing facilities for all pupils	There are 2 downstairs disabled toilets with a connecting common access room. These can be designated as changing rooms as necessary.	Ground floor changing rooms designated as "disabled" facilities for pupils.
Health Centre: external access only for wheelchairs	Enhance internal accessibility or make reasonable adjustment	Monitor in case further action required	Ongoing
Petre Library: access not possible due to main staircases	Make reasonable adjustment to ensure Library facilities are available by other means	Encourage greater use of Virtual Learning Environment Study prep to be relocated as necessary	Ongoing
Main Refectory: external access only via East Wing door for wheelchairs	Ensure pupils, staff and visitors have greater access to catering facilities	Procure a ramp for the stairs	When and as necessary

Chemistry and Physics Lab, Science & Biology corridors: external access through health centre only for wheelchairs	Ensure access or make reasonable adjustment	Access to health centre ramp & lifts can be enhanced with a designated pupil 'buddy'. Purchase temporary ramp Relocate lessons where required	Monitor. When and as necessary
New Classrooms: no access for wheelchairs	Provide access or make reasonable adjustment	Consider providing a temporary ramp combined with a 'buddy' system. Timetable relevant lessons to more accessible classrooms if required	Monitor on an ongoing basis
Art Block: main teaching takes place on 1 st floor accessible only by stairs	Ensure access or make reasonable adjustment	Relocate lessons as necessary to studios in ground floor adjacent block	When and as necessary
1st floor classrooms - RS, Classics, MFL only accessible by stairs	Ensure access or make reasonable adjustment	Relocate lessons as necessary to ground floor classrooms	When and as necessary
No disabled access to Headmaster's office	Provide appropriate access to Headmaster's Office or reasonable adjustment	Arrange for any meetings in an accessible room	When and as necessary
Learning Support: room on 1 st floor accessible only by external stairs	Ensure access or make reasonable adjustment	Learning support teachers to use other available classrooms as necessary Intention to relocate Learning Support within main School buildings. Potentially in the Fasenfeld room	Completed – Learning Support relocated to the Fasenfeld Room and fully accessible.

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Improving the Curriculum Access at Downside School

<u>Target</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>	<u>Achievement</u>
Training (both in-house and using outside agencies) for teachers on differentiating the curriculum	Head of Learning Support to annually undertake an audit of staff training requirements and propose suitable staff INSET at an individual level, department level, faculty level and whole School level.	All teachers are able to meet fully the requirements of disabled children's needs with regards to accessing the curriculum.	–Ongoing with an annual review	disabled children have equitable access to the curriculum.
quality Assurance on how teachers are differentiating the curriculum	Head of Learning Support to monitor the provision of a differentiated curriculum for disabled children through the School's Quality Assurance mechanism. This will ensure that the specific needs of pupils living with a disability, in terms of basic daily living skills, relationships and future aspirations, are met with respect to their curriculum access.	Teachers are aware of the specific needs of a particular child, and has differentiated the curriculum to ensure that they are able to make the same progress in their learning as their peers.	Ongoing with an annual review	All pupils with a disability at Downside make the same progress in their learning as their peers.

<p>All out-of-school activities pertaining to the curriculum are differentiated and planned to ensure the participation of disabled pupils.</p>	<p>Review all out-of-school curriculum provision to ensure compliance with legislation, and to ensure that disabled children can make the same progress in their learning as their peers. All risk assessments take account of pupils with disabilities.</p>	<p>All out-of-school curriculum activities will be conducted in an inclusive environment with providers that comply with all current and future legislative requirements, and all activities are differentiated.</p>	<p>Ongoing with an annual review.</p>	<p>Disabled pupils have equitable access to all out-of-school curriculum activities, and make the same progress in their learning as their peers.</p>
<p>Training for Awareness Raising of Disability Issues</p>	<p>Provide training for governors, staff, pupils and parents.</p>	<p>Whole school community has been trained in order to raise awareness of disability issues.</p>	<p>Ongoing with an annual review.</p>	<p>All relevant members of the School community have undergone specific training.</p>

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Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils at Downside School

<u>Target</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Outcome</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>	<u>Achievement</u>
The accessibility of information will not be a hurdle to pupils with disabilities. All information is equally available to all pupils	Review how information is provided to pupils	The School provides information in a variety of ways which means that it is accessible to all pupils regardless of a disability	Ongoing	All pupils can access information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled

Authorised by



Chair of the Board of Governing Body (approved at the plenary meeting)

Date

March 2019

Next review March 2020