



# Westwood Primary School

## Disability Equality Scheme

Written: November 2007

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**CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Weetwood Primary School Profile

Weetwood is a non-denominational community primary school situated in North West Leeds. The school has good links with other schools and is an active member of our 'Family of Schools'. It is a mixed gender school with an age range of 3-11 year olds. It has an admission limit of 30 pupils, with one class in each year group and a 52 place Nursery, offering 15 hours a week. We have a growing number of children from different ethnic backgrounds and with English as an Additional Language. The staff team offer a range of experience across the different subject areas taught in school.

#### 1.2 Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Equality Duty

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to cover education. Since September 2002, the schools have had three key duties towards disabled pupils, under Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA):

- not to treat disabled pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage;
- to plan to increase access to education for disabled pupils.

Schools and their Governing Body are required, under Part 5A of the DDA to:

- promote equality of opportunity for disabled people: pupils, staff, parents, carers and other people who use the school or may wish to;
- prepare and publish a disability equality scheme to show how they will meet these duties.

In 2005, The 'Disability Equality Duty' was introduced to the Disability Discrimination Act. This Duty requires schools to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their impairments;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people,
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life; and

- take steps to take account of a disabled person's impairments, even where that involves treating the disabled person more favourably than other people.

The Duty does not bring in new rights for disabled people. It requires schools to demonstrate a more proactive approach to promoting disability equality and eliminating discrimination. It sets out a specific duty for all schools to prepare and publish a 'Disability Equality Scheme'. This scheme sets out the steps the school will take to ensure we continue to provide all disabled pupils, parents, carers, governors and staff with a high quality of education and accessibility in all aspects of school life. Our Scheme draws upon existing good practice and builds upon it further. In 2011 it was also incorporated into our Single Equality Scheme, a document which brings together our guiding policies and action plans for all areas of equality, in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### **1.3 Definition of Disability**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a disabled person as someone who has a, *'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'*.

According to the Disability Discrimination Act, an impairment is to be treated as affecting the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, only if it affects one or more of the following:

- mobility,
- manual dexterity,
- physical co-ordination,
- continence,
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects,
- speech,
- hearing or eyesight,
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand,
- perception of the risk of physical danger.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 has extended the definition to include people with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer from the point of diagnosis. Individuals with a mental illness no longer have to demonstrate that it is 'clinically well-recognised'; although the person must still demonstrate a long-term and substantial adverse affect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purpose of this Scheme, the Disability Equality in Education (DEE) recommends that all pupils with Special Educational Needs and those with long-term medical needs are treated as disabled. However, it is important to be aware that not all people with a disability have a Special Educational Need.

## 2. STARTING POINTS

### 2.1 Weetwood's ethos, vision and values

Our school mission statement is:

*Respecting each other,  
Expecting our best,  
Learning in a happy school*

At Weetwood, we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for disabled pupils, staff and all other school users. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which people feel free to disclose their disability and to participate fully in school life.

We believe in the '**Social Model of Disability**' which enables all disabled people to look at themselves in a positive way, resulting in increased self-esteem and independence. The 'Social Model' of disability does not consider the severity of a person's impairment but instead establishes that everyone is equal. The model believes it is the world and society that creates barriers that limit or prevent disabled people from enjoying the same opportunities as people who are not disabled, and that subsequently it is the responsibility of us all to illuminate these barriers to ensure equality. A fuller description of the Social Model of disability can be found in the Equalities section of the school website.

To ensure inclusion in all aspects of school life, the achievement, progress and participation of disabled pupils is monitored. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the school environment is as accessible as possible. We will not tolerate harassment or stereotyping of disabled people with any form of impairment.

### 2.2 Involvement of disabled members of the school and information gathering

Weetwood School recognises the impact our policies and practices may have on disabled people in school and in particular on:

- the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees;
- the educational opportunities available to and the achievements of disabled people.

The collection of information from a wide range of sources is crucial in supporting us in making decisions about what action would best improve opportunities and outcomes for the disabled members of school.

The importance of involving disabled people fully in the development of our Disability Equality Scheme is not only a requirement of the duty but also brings real benefits in terms of:

- Providing insights into the barriers they face;

- Providing expertise in identifying ways to overcome these barriers, and
- Improving working relationships between school and its disabled members.

We also believe that people's perception and understanding of disability is important so have involved all members of the school, disabled and non-disabled, in the development of the scheme.

We have included all members of school by asking them the following:

- **What do they believe a disability to be and do they consider themselves or anyone in their family to have a disability?**
- **Would they define themselves or anybody in their family as having a disability?**  
*Once given a definition of 'disability', they have been asked to reconsider if they feel themselves or anyone in their family to have a disability.*
- **How well do they believe Weetwood Primary School caters for the disabled members of the school?**
- **How could we improve the facilities at Weetwood for its disabled members?**

These questions have been asked to all members of school in a number of different ways:

- Discussions with all children within class time
- Discussions with staff during staff meetings
- Parent/carer questionnaires sent home to all parents

As well as through discussions and questionnaires, all members of the school have the opportunity to share their own views about disabilities, including their own if required, in a confidential and anonymous manner.

Throughout the information gathering process, the definition of a disability, as defined by the DDA, has always been used. It is hoped that if all members of the school have a greater understanding of the term 'disability', a more accurate picture can be painted. The use of the DDA's definition is also to encourage more people to disclose their disability. Although at Weetwood disclosure of all disabilities is encouraged, it does not always happen. As part of this scheme, we would like to encourage this more, in order to remove any barriers and make any adjustments needed to ensure full inclusion in school life.

All information received from discussions, questionnaires and by any other means is used to inform Weetwood School in setting the main priorities in its Disability Equality Scheme. The information received also helps us identify disabled members of school who may wish to be included in identifying areas of action.

## **2.3 Impact Assessment**

An important aspect of our 'Disability Equality Scheme' is its assessment and monitoring. Any adjustments, changes, new policies or procedures will be assessed annually to decide what impact they have had on the disabled users of the school and whether these changes are positive or negative.

These assessments will take place in a number of different ways:

- Involving disabled users of the school, or any other users these changes may have had an impact on.
- Monitoring and assessing all disabled pupils on a regular basis, through formal assessments, discussions with SENCO, Head Teacher, Governors and parents/carers.
- Surveying parents/carers about how any changes have affected them.

We are hopeful that disabled school users will feel comfortable disclosing their disabilities in order for us, through consultation with them, to accurately assess the effectiveness of changes that have been made.

## **3. IDENTIFYING THE MAIN PRIORITIES FOR OUR SCHOOL'S SCHEME AND DECIDING OUR ACTIONS**

The priorities for Weetwood's Disability Equality Scheme are set in the light of the following:

- an examination of the information that the school has gathered; and
- the messages that the school has heard from disabled children, staff, parents/carers and other users of the school.

As was mentioned above, the number of people with a disability at Weetwood is below average so many of the comments and views are from non-disabled users of the school. The feedback is limited by many respondents' view that they cannot comment fully as they have little, if any, experience in this area.

### **3.1 What the users of Weetwood Primary School have said**

A great deal of information, both positive and negative, came back from the initial questionnaires, discussions and general comments and this has formed the basis of our School Action Plan priorities. These findings are detailed below under the sections that were used in the parent/carer survey.

#### **Understanding of Disability**

In general, most parents/carers and staff have a good understanding of what a disability is. They see it as any form of impairment or condition which may prevent individuals from carrying out normal everyday activities. They have a good

understanding of what could be classed as a disability, and an awareness of non-physical forms of disability.

However, not all children have as clear a view and need to develop their understanding of what a disability is.

### **The disabled facilities and services at Weetwood Primary School**

The general opinion of Weetwood Primary School is that it is a friendly, welcoming and caring school. It has a very positive attitude towards inclusion and the teaching supports the needs of disabled children and adults well. However, the premises and accessibility of the school was seen as less welcoming. Many aspects of the school building were mentioned in the questionnaires and discussions and these are summarised below.

- **Car Parking facilities** -the general 'chaotic/busy' parking before and after school was mentioned throughout with an emphasis on the lack of a disabled car parking facility anywhere in school.
- **Ramps** - many people acknowledge that there is an existing ramp at Weetwood but do not find it very accessible. Many find it too narrow, not very easy to use and not in a suitable place (does not lead directly to the office). Others would like to see more ramps, especially near the main office and the covered court area.
- **Intercom system on main gate/door** - it was commented that this was positioned too high for wheelchair users to be able to access.
- **Disabled toilets** - all users are generally happy with this facility although some people did not know we had one until recently.
- **Lifts** - Although we have a lift at Weetwood many school users were unaware of it.
- **Signs around school** - the lack of signs around school was a frequent comment by parents/carers and staff, and explains in part why many people did not know what facilities are available in school. In particular, the lack of a sign for a designated disabled entrance was commented on; this was felt to be an important issue, especially for new visitors to the school.
- **Internal doors** - many staff commented on how the internal doors can be hard to open, even for a fully mobile person. A wheelchair user or person with restricted mobility may find them particularly difficult.
- **Entrance for wheelchair users** - this issue was mentioned in the feedback from the parents. At school there is currently no designated entrance for wheelchair users.
- **Lack of knowledge about what facilities are available** - many parents/carers found it difficult to comment on the facilities for disabled people in school as they are not aware of what we have and have never had experience of them.

## Weetwood in the Future

Again, many people found it hard to comment on what they would like to see for disabled people at Weetwood in the future but for those that did, clear messages could be identified. These improvements are listed below, with the most mentioned ones at the top.

- Improving signage around school, identifying where the disabled facilities are.
- Providing better access to the school in general and for moving around school.
- Providing disabled car-parking facilities, at the main entrance and the nursery entrance.
- Tailoring communication to the needs of users. Different forms of communication were suggested such as e-mail, telephone calls, letters in larger font and on different coloured paper.
- Welcoming disabled people and groups into school to talk about their disability and their achievements in life.
- Teaching, promoting and raising awareness of disabilities to children much more during school.
- Training for staff and other members of the school about disability in general, our expectations and perceptions.
- Higher expectations of children with disabilities.
- Encouraging and setting up a parent group/network for improving disability awareness and access.
- Introducing a designated member of staff/governor for disabled users of school to contact when needed, similar to the SENCO.
- Encouraging openness.
- Celebrating diversity.

### 3.2 Identifying the main priorities

After examining the parent/carer surveys and the feedback from staff and children a number of priorities were highlighted for our 'Disability Equality Scheme' Action Plan. An action plan identifies a series of actions that will allow us to make progress on these priorities. All Actions within this scheme will be implemented within 3 years. The Action Plan can be found at the end of the scheme but the main priorities can be seen below, divided into the six elements of the General Duty.

#### PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

- To continue to encourage disclosure of disabilities for all users of the school
- Re-examine/update our policies, eg our 'school trip' policy, with respect to the inclusion of disabled people

#### ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION

- To provide training for all staff about disability equality and other disability issues

- To ensure school has a designated member of staff and governor for disabled users of the school to contact when necessary
- To improve communication techniques/systems for those who require it
- To help children become more aware of disabilities and disability issues

### **ELIMINATING HARASSMENT**

- To review/update our 'Anti-Bullying Policy' in relation to the 'Disability Equality Scheme'

### **PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTITUDES**

- To use a wide range of images throughout our teaching that show disabled people in a variety of contexts
- To display a wide range of pictures throughout school showing our disabled pupils participating in school life

### **ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE**

- To regularly invite disabled members of the community into school to talk about their life and achievements
- To encourage disabled parents/carers to participate in School Association events, any other school events and the Governing Body
- To encourage disabled users of school, or those with experience of a disability, to participate in a focus/working group to review the 'Disability Equality Scheme' annually.

### **TAKE STEPS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF A DISABLED PERSON'S IMPAIRMENTS, EVEN WHERE THAT INVOLVES TREATING THE DISABLED PERSON MORE FAVOURABLY THAN OTHER PEOPLE**

- To improve the accessibility of the school to disabled users.
- To improve signage around school, indoor and outdoor, showing users where the disabled facilities are
- To identify a designated entrance for wheelchair users with clear signs.
- To produce and distribute a welcome pack for any disabled members new to the school, identifying the available facilities and where they are.

### **3.3 Reporting**

The school will evaluate and report annually the progress made in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people. The annual report will include details of:

- Information we have gathered over the year
- How this information was used
- Action points completed during the year and those that are ongoing

We will ensure that disabled people or those with an interest in disability are involved in this process.

### **3.4 Revisiting and revising the Disability Equality Scheme**

Our scheme will be reviewed and revised 3 yearly, in consultation with disabled users of the school and those with an interest in disability. A new action plan will be produced, responding to issues identified over the previous 3 year period and identified in our annual reviews of the scheme.