

Accessibility Plan St. Thomas More VC Academy

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| Name and Job Title of Author: | Martin Ward- Headteacher |
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ENCOUNTER ● LEARN ● GROW ● FLOURISH

Table of changes

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Statement of intent

This plan outlines how St. Thomas More VC Academy aims to increase access to education for pupils with disabilities in the three areas required by the planning duties in the Equality Act 2010 (i.e. the curriculum, physical environment and information).

A person is regarded as having a disability under the Equality Act where they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This plan aims to:

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

The above aims will be delivered within a reasonable timeframe, and in ways which are determined after taking into account pupils' disabilities and the views of parents and pupils. In the preparation of an accessibility strategy, the LA will have regard to the need to allocate adequate resources in the implementation of this strategy.

The governing board also recognises its responsibilities towards employees with disabilities and will:

- Monitor recruitment procedures to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities.
- Provide appropriate support and provision for employees with disabilities to ensure that they can carry out their work effectively without barriers.
- Undertake reasonable adjustments to enable staff to access the workplace.

The plan will be resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised in consultation with:

- Pupils' parents.
- The headteacher and other relevant members of staff.
- Governors.
- External partners.

1. Legal framework

This plan has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Education Act 1996
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
- DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'
- DfE (2015) 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years'

This plan operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Equality Information and Objectives Policy
- Early Years Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Administering Medication Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that all accessibility planning adheres to and reflects the principles outlined in this plan.
- Approving this plan before it is implemented.
- Monitoring this plan.

The headteacher will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that staff members are aware of pupils' disabilities and medical conditions.
- Establishing whether a new pupil has any disabilities or medical conditions which the school should be aware of.
- Consulting with relevant and reputable experts if challenging situations regarding pupils' disabilities arise.

- Working closely with the governing board, LA and external agencies to effectively create and implement the school's Accessibility Plan.

The SENCO will be responsible for:

- Working closely with the headteacher and governing board to ensure that pupils with SEND are appropriately supported.
- Ensuring they have oversight of the needs of pupils with SEND attending the school, and advising the headteacher in relation to those needs as appropriate.

Staff members will be responsible for:

- Acting in accordance with this plan at all times.
- Supporting disabled pupils to access their environment and their education wherever necessary, e.g. by making reasonable adjustments to their practice.
- Ensuring that their actions do not discriminate against any pupil as a result of their disability.

3. The Accessibility Audit

The governing board will undertake an **annual** Accessibility Audit. The audit will cover the following three areas:

- **Access to the curriculum** – the governing board will assess the extent to which pupils with disabilities can access the curriculum on an equal basis with their peers.
- **Access to the physical environment** – the governing board will assess the extent to which pupils with disabilities can access the physical environment on an equal basis with their peers.
- **Access to information** – the governing board will assess the extent to which pupils with disabilities can access information on an equal basis with their peers.

When conducting the audit, the governing board will consider all kinds of disabilities and impairments, including, but not limited to, the following:

- **Ambulatory disabilities** – this includes pupils who use a wheelchair or mobility aid
- **Dexterity disabilities** – this includes those whose everyday manual handling of objects and fixtures may be impaired
- **Visual disabilities** – this includes those with visual impairments and sensitivities
- **Auditory disabilities** – this includes those with hearing impairments and sensitivities
- **Comprehension** – this includes hidden disabilities, such as autism and dyslexia

Current good practice

We aim to ask about any disability or health condition in early communications with new parents and carers. For parents and carers of children already at the school, we collect information on disability as and when a need occurs.

Physical Environment

Disabled pupils participate in extra-curricular activities. Some aspects of extra-curricular activities present particular challenges, for example: lunch and break times for pupils with social/interaction impairments, after-school clubs for pupils with physical impairments, school trips for pupils with emotional or medical needs; there are very few if any activities that pupils cannot be involved in with appropriate support and provision of staff. In addition, to access our KS2 upstairs area we have a newly fitted stairlift which is available to use for any children with a physical impairment. This is supervised by a member of staff.

Curriculum

There are no areas of the curriculum to which disabled pupils have limited or no access. Some areas of the curriculum present particular challenges, for example: PE for pupils with a physical impairment, science and technology for pupils with a visual impairment, humanities for pupils with learning difficulties, however by differentiation, individualisation and human resource all can be accessed at a level commensurate with the child's needs. Other issues affect the participation of disabled pupils, for example: bullying, peer relationships, policies on the administration of medicines, the provision of personal care, the presence or lack of role models or images of disabled people, in effect, all the school's policies and procedures, written and unwritten do and will take account of any disabled pupils.

The findings from the audit will be used to identify short-, medium- and long-term actions to address specific gaps and improve access.

All actions will be carried out in a reasonable timeframe, and after taking into account pupils' disabilities and the preferences of their parents. The actions that will be undertaken are detailed in the following sections of this document.

4. Planning duty 1: Curriculum

| | Issue | What | Who | When | Outcome | Review |
|--------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|-------------|
| Short term | Staff members do not know whether the curriculum is accessible | Audit of the curriculum | Headteacher, teachers, SENCO | Spring 2026 | Standards of achievement are high as pupils and staff are able to access the curriculum. | Summer 2026 |
| | Increasing level of SEND need across the school setting | Targeted CPD for all staff to ensure that provision is matched to individual SEND needs. Pupil passports in place to track progress and review targets of all pupils. | Headteacher, external advisors, SENCO | Ongoing | Staff members have the skills to support pupils with SEND All pupils with SEND achieve | Autumn 2026 |
| Medium term | Ensuring all school trips meet needs of vulnerable/SEND pupils | Needs of pupils with SEND are incorporated into the planning process and appropriate risk assessments are completed to ensure inclusivity | Teachers, SENCO | Spring 20 <u>26</u> | All schools trips are inclusive and attendance of pupils with SEND is 100% | Summer 2026 |
| Long term | Pupils with SEND cannot access lessons | Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure all pupils can access the whole curriculum. | Headteacher, ICT manager, SENCO | Ongoing | All pupils can access the curriculum and achieve well. | Spring 2026 |

5. Planning duty 2: Physical environment

There are currently no physical environment barriers due to a recent access audit.

The school is an old two storey building which has always been used for educational purposes. The ground floor comprises of three classrooms, the school hall, gymnasium, dining area, sacred space, resources/training room and the main reception/school office. Four classrooms and two cloakrooms are on the top floor, which is accessed by a set of stairs and a stairlift installed in September 2024.

There are several entrances to the school via ramped access; however access to the main school reception is via steps. The steps are marked with yellow highlighting paint. At present we have no wheelchair dependent pupils, parents or members of staff and signage is in place to assist visitors should they need additional support to access the school site.

A disabled toilet is available on the ground floor. It is fitted with a handrail and a pull emergency cord, as well as an adapted wash basin at wheelchair height. The school has internal emergency signage and escape routes are clearly marked. The school car park includes a dedicated disabled parking bay.

The most recent addition to the school is an internal and external ramp, allowing improved access into the main school hall, which is situated below ground level. We have also improved the front entrance to ensure that the pathway to the school is level and therefore accessibility has been improved.

Parents can access a range of information about the school from the school website, including performance data, curriculum information, newsletters and a calendar of events. There is also a direct link to the school's twitter page that is regularly updated with school events and information. A text service to parents is used to communicate messages quickly and we have recently developed a school app, which allows parents to access school information from their smart phones.

6. Planning duty 3: Information

| | Issue | What | Who | When | Outcome | Review |
|-------------|---|--|--------------------|-------------|--|-------------|
| Short term | Management staff do not know whether school information is accessible | Audit of information and delivery procedures | SENCO, ICT manager | Spring 2026 | School is aware of accessibility gaps to its information delivery procedures | Summer 2026 |
| | School does not know how to make written information accessible | Schools seeks advice from external advisors | SENCO | Summer 2026 | School is aware of local services for converting written information into alternative formats | Autumn 2026 |
| Medium term | Written information is not accessible to pupils with visual impairments | Whole school adopts dyslexic friendly font on all displays and forms of writing. Incorporate appropriate colour schemes when refurbishing and install window blinds | SENCO, ICT manager | Spring 2026 | Written information is fully accessible to children with visual impairments due to use of dyslexic friendly school font and coloured overlays. | Summer 2026 |
| Long term | School website is not accessible to parents and wider community. | Implementation of new school website and audit of content and accessibility. | ICT manager | Spring 2026 | Website is fully accessible | Autumn 2027 |

7. Monitoring and review

This plan will be reviewed on an **annual** basis by the governing board and headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this plan is **January 2027**. Any changes to this plan will be communicated to all staff members and relevant stakeholders.