



Vranch House School

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

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Period cover by the accessibility plan: September 2023 - September 2026

Introduction:

To promote equality of opportunity for disabled people: pupils, staff, parents, carers and other people who use the school or may wish to, duties in Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 require the responsible body of a school to prepare an accessibility plan and further such plans at such times as may be prescribed.

An accessibility plan is a plan for -

- increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school's curriculum,
- improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school, and
- improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has 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.

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial - eg it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, eg a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

This scheme and the accompanying accessibility plans set out how the governing body will promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

The purpose and direction of the school's plan: vision and values

At Vranch House we aim to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life, and take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled people more favorably than other people;
- eliminate discrimination wherever it is encountered;
- eliminate harassment related to a disability whenever it is identified.

The duties apply to pupils, staff, parents, governors, trustees, students on placements, volunteers and visitors.

Vranch House background

Vranch House was built and evolved as a site to cater for the needs of children with physical disabilities over a 50-year period. Through constant assessment and improvement, we ensure that the building with all its facilities and the surrounding site are accessible and safe for the use of children and adults with physical and associated difficulties.

Safety:

All doors from the outside are secure - front doors are operated by a receptionist and all side doors fitted with key-code. All visitors must sign in and be accompanied throughout their visit. Children are fully supervised at all times whilst on site and on organised outings.

All rooms have straight access to the garden ensuring that in case of emergency the building can be evacuated in less than two minutes. Practice fire drills are carried out regularly.

Checks and updates of Health and Safety, building and fire checks are carried out on a regular basis to ensure the site is fully compliant with all regulations and fit for purpose.

Accessibility:

The main school building is one storey, purpose built for use of wheelchair users. The Upper school comprises the lower east wing of the Honeylands buildings. Vranch House is all contained within the ground floor. The corridors and classrooms of all parts of the school are spacious to enable easy wheelchair access. All classroom toilets are fitted with hoists. Mobile hoists are in use across school and in the hydrotherapy pool. Several disabled toilets for visitors are located around the building. The toilets are fitted with sliding doors for easy access and low sinks and emergency cords.

Exterior:

The outdoor classroom and the powered extractable canopies to each classroom provide ample opportunities for all classes to safely enjoy the outdoor learning environment. In the constantly maintained gardens, children and visitors of all abilities can enjoy a sensory trail with water fountains, a sensory tunnel with mist and bird songs operated by motion sensors. The indoor wheelchair 'track' continues under the garden path. The garden is landscaped to ensure it is easily accessible for wheelchair users.

1. How we involved disabled people in developing this scheme

All governors and trustees have been introduced to the background to the Disability Equality Scheme and how it is being developed by active consultation with all groups within the school. Letters were sent to parents to seek ideas for areas of improvement in the accessibility plan. Staff and volunteers had consultation meetings with the Head of Education. All the pupils at Vranch House have physical disabilities. Some also have visual, hearing, communication and learning difficulties. The pupils were consulted and feedback given to all pupils during assembly. There are a number of disabled people involved as staff, volunteers, governors, trustees and family members of pupils with disabilities at the school.

The Head of Therapies also consulted with outpatients and their families. Following these meetings the Head of Education reported back to the trustees and governors.

When consulting with pupils voice output communication aids, communication boards and signing methods were used.

2. How we intend to gather information on the effect of our policies and practices on disabled people.

All concerned representative groups were consulted and informed using a variety of approaches including letters, newsletters, formal and informal meetings and the school intranet. When consulting with pupils voice output communication aids, communication boards and signing methods were used.

a) Recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees

We only know who our disabled staff are by personal disclosure or visible disability. If a member of staff discloses a disability then this information remains confidential.

Staff are given opportunities to raise personal issues during CPD meetings, staff, class and department meetings and by talking to their head of department. During moving and handling training they are given advice to disclose any information which may relate to health and safety. The school nurses are available for confidential discussions on work related health or welfare issues.

During staff and teacher meetings information is given about duties and disclosure.

b) Educational opportunities available to and achievements of disabled pupils

All pupils at the school have special educational needs and a physical disability. Some pupils have speech and communication difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning difficulties and medical needs which may often be complex.

All new pupils have a therapy and educational assessment, upon being taken onto roll at the school, when their abilities and difficulties are assessed. Parents and previous placements/assessment centres are also consulted.

All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) stating their special educational needs with full information about their disabilities.

It is part of the culture and ethos of the school that pupils are encouraged to discuss any difficulties or issues with any of the professionals they meet e.g. classroom staff, school nurse or therapy staff.

Progress data is held on all pupils including EHCPs and annual reviews, annual reports, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), attainment against our bespoke Vbranch House Individual Education and Wellbeing (VIEW) curriculum. Earwig Academic online is used to capture evidence of progress against the VIEW curriculum, and produce assessment data; all of which operations conform to GDPR regulations.

Pupils have individual feeding programmes as appropriate and individual plans or protocols describing their needs. The pupils all have risk assessments and handling plans for transfers, independent mobility and assisted movement (e.g. hoists, seating, toileting). Therapy and nursing staff also contribute to reviews, reports and IEPs.

All pupils are consulted on their progress and achievements as part of their individual annual review.

Pupils have the opportunity to access and use a wide range of ICT and Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) technologies in the classrooms. The school employs an ICT technician to facilitate ICT access. ICT includes computer/internet, communication and powered mobility. A wide range of switches, roller balls, height adjustable computers and specialist keyboards are available.

c) Information on other disabled people using our services

Parents

Information is given to parents in the initial parents' pack. Telephone and email contact is available and home visits are arranged as appropriate. Emails and Earwig are used as an online services to provide information for parents on a range of issues. Some pupils who have communication difficulties take messages home on simply programmed communication aids. All children have individual diaries which are shared between home and school, respite, holiday clubs and any other setting the child might attend. Parents and teachers sign Home-School Contracts when pupils start at school. Nurses ask parents at initial interview how they would like to be contacted (phone or letter or special arrangements). Large print information is available on request. Reports, letters and information, is translated on request for any families where English is an additional language.

3. How we will use the information gathered

We will use the information gathered to inform the following:

- a review of the existing action plan;
- the development of a new action plan;
- the review of the Disability Equality Scheme.

4. How the impact of our school policies and practices will be assessed

We have a three year cycle of curriculum policy review which has a section on equal opportunities and pupils' special educational needs. Other policies are reviewed as necessary and staff are required to read and sign these annually. All curriculum policies are on the school's website and on the school's intranet.

Priority (what we are hoping to achieve)	Action required (including necessary resources)	Timescale	Responsible persons
Improve accessibility and accessible play	As part of Vbranch House fundraising, improve access to the gardens to the rear of	Projected Sept 2023 to July	Chief Executive Head of Education (HoE)

equipment in outside areas	the lower school. Installation of a wheelchair accessible 'sensory pathway', 'sensory pods' and accessible basket swing.	2025	
Continual review of the inside learning environment	Audit and maintain present education and therapy delivery environments. When appropriate or required, research, purchase and install modifications or additional equipment.	Ongoing Sept 2023 to July 2026	Chief Executive HoE
Audit and maximise free movement of pupils between classrooms and resources on site	The re-modelling of classrooms, adjoining toilet facilities and new therapy spaces (including innowalk suite) to adhere to ethos of promoting pupil independence in terms of layout and accessibility.	Ongoing Sept 2023 to July 2026	Chief Executive HoE

5. Accessibility Plan 2023 to 2026

Review Date: September 2026

Senior Member of Staff Responsible: Head of Education

Kayleigh Price, Head of Education - in consultation with staff, pupils and their families and governors.