

COGNITA
TEACHING EXCELLENCE



OXFORD HOUSE SCHOOL

Accessibility Plan

KEY FACTS:

- ✦ **This plan enables schools to ensure compliance with laws regarding opportunity for pupils/potential pupils.**
- ✦ **It is reviewed every three years.**
- ✦ **Cognita will comply with statutory requirements and guidance.**
- ✦ **Individuals are responsible for their discriminatory actions.**
- ✦ **The school's liability extends beyond the life of the pupil at the school.**
- ✦ **The spirit of the law is to make/consider reasonable adjustments.**
- ✦ **The plan outlines Cognita Schools' duties around accessibility and how to deal with claims.**
- ✦ **Guidance for creating each school's unique plan is given in the Appendix.**

1 Background

- 1.1. On 1 October 2012, The Equality Act replaced all existing equality legislation such as the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Sex Discrimination Act. It extends protection from discrimination in some areas and has placed new duties on schools. (For further information see the Equality and Diversity Policy).
- 1.2. The Act makes it unlawful for **Cognita and the school's governance committee**, which is the responsible body of a school, to discriminate against, harass, or victimise a pupil or potential pupil in relation to:-
 - 1.2.1. Admissions;
 - 1.2.2. The way we provide education for pupils;
 - 1.2.3. The way we provide pupils access to any benefit, facility or service;
 - 1.2.4. By excluding any pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.
- 1.3. The protected characteristics are:
 - 1.3.1. **sex;**
 - 1.3.2. **race;**
 - 1.3.3. **disability;**
 - 1.3.4. **religion or belief;**
 - 1.3.5. **sexual orientation;**
 - 1.3.6. **gender reassignment;**
 - 1.3.7. **pregnancy or maternity;**
- 1.4. There is a still a requirement to have an accessibility plan outlining how we intend to improve access for disabled pupils to the physical environment, the curriculum and written information.

- 1.5. The Equality Act applies to all independent schools in England and Wales. (Equality Act 2010: Schedule 10, Paragraph 3 and Disability Discrimination regulations 2005). Furthermore, as proprietors Cognita are required to draw up equality objectives under the Specific Duties Regulations 2011 so that we meet the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. This Accessibility Plan is reviewed every three years.
- 1.6. Any person such as staff in schools who act on behalf of the proprietor, Cognita and any governance committee, are responsible for their own discriminatory actions and the Proprietor (Cognita Schools and the governance committee) is also liable unless it can prove that it has taken all reasonable steps to stop the staff member from doing the discriminatory action, or from doing anything of that kind.
- 1.7. The school's liability not to discriminate, harass or victimise does not end when a pupil has left the school, but relates also to events afterwards such as the provision of references, or old pupil networks.

2 Disability Discrimination Act

- 2.1. The disability provisions in the Equality Act mainly replicate those in the former Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). There are some minor differences as follows:-
 - 2.1.1. the definition of disability is less restrictive;
 - 2.1.2. direct discrimination can no longer be defended as justified;
 - 2.1.3. failure to make a reasonable adjustment can no longer be defended as justified;
 - 2.1.4. from September 2012, we are under a duty to make available auxiliary aids and services as reasonable adjustments, where these are not being supplied through a Statement of Special Educational Needs or from other sources.

3 Definition of Disability

- 3.1. The Act defines disability as *when a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.*
- 3.2. Some specific conditions such as multiple sclerosis, cancer or HIV are considered as disabilities regardless of their effect.
- 3.3. Long term is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least twelve months.-

4 Reasonable Adjustments

- 4.1. We aim to ensure that nothing we do as a school places a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils. However, where we have to do so, we make sure that we take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

- 4.2. When it is reasonable to do so, we provide auxiliary aids or services for a disabled pupil, when such an aid would alleviate any substantial disadvantage that the pupil faces compared to other non-disabled pupils.
- 4.3. Where an auxiliary aid is not provided under the SEN system (ie via a Statement/EHC Plan) there should be no assumption that it must be provided as a reasonable adjustment. Any decision would be taken on the basis of the facts of an individual case, including cost implications.
- 4.4. There is no legal definition of auxiliary aids. We interpret this to mean any or all of the following: helpful; providing support or assistance; and that these can be things or persons which help. We include hearing loops, adaptive keyboards, and special software.
- 4.5. Our SEN policy defines what provision we make available including reasonable adjustments in our school. We will consider what is reasonable in the context of our school, given the circumstances of each individual case.
- 4.6. Where the auxiliary aid has a benefit to the rest of the child's life outside of school, it would be unreasonable for our school to make such provision; eg hearing aids.
- 4.7. We consider that effective and practicable adjustments for disabled pupils will involve little or no cost or disruption, and will therefore be considered as reasonable. Where substantial adaptations are required which are not contained within our three year accessibility plan, we reserve the right to deem these as unreasonable.
- 4.8. It is our aim to ensure that disabled pupils play as full a part as possible in school life and our accessibility plan and reasonable adjustments help support that aim. Where any adjustment would have a detrimental effect on other pupils, we would not consider it to be *reasonable*. For example, if a geography field trip were planned to involve climbing and a wheelchair user could not take part, we would carefully consider how the disabled pupil could participate viably, but we would not cancel the trip because to do so would be detrimental to other pupils.

Our Vision

5.1 The School aims to understand and to develop the potential which all children possess and to send them on to senior schools as literate, numerate, well-mannered and happy individuals, taking 'pride in work' and 'joy in achievement'.

5.2 Inclusion is the process of taking the necessary steps to ensure that every young person is given equality of opportunity to develop socially, to learn and to enjoy school life.

5 Our duty around Accessibility for Disabled Pupils

- 6.1. Our accessibility plan focuses on the following areas for implementation:--
 - 6.1.1. increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum;
 - 6.1.2. improving the physical environment to enable disabled pupils to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided;
 - 6.1.3. improving the availability of accessible information to disabled pupils.

- 6.2. Our plan also includes the resource implications of implementing the Plan.
- 6.3. Our approach includes the following:-
 - 6.3.1. access, audit and review (**See appendix 2**) (ie the nature of the schools' population, context, future pupil numbers, staff training needs, impact of anti-bullying strategies, timetabling, trips, medicines, clubs, outcomes for SEND in external exams, views of parents, pupils, voluntary sector, symbols, signage, font size etc);
 - 6.3.2. identify actions;
 - 6.3.3. set goals and targets;
 - 6.3.4. consult on the proposed plan;
 - 6.3.5. publicize the plan;
 - 6.3.6. implementation; and
 - 6.3.7. evaluate the effectiveness of the Plan.
- 6.4. Our accessibility plan is outlined on the attached proforma at **Appendix 1**.

6 Discrimination Claims

- 7.1. Claims for discrimination on the grounds of disability against our school must be heard by the First Tier Tribunal (SENDIST) in England.
- 7.2. Such claims of discrimination or harassment which would be brought by a parent of a pupil against our school, would be brought to the Tribunal by the parent. This must be brought within six months of the act to which the claim relates. Any remedy will not include compensation.-

7 Monitoring & Evaluation

- 8.1. The named person in our school who is responsible for this plan is the Business Manager.
- 8.2. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that this Plan is implemented and to ensure that it is fair and equal to all.
- 8.3. It is the responsibility of all staff to monitor the success of this Plan by ensuring that the priority areas are addressed by them in the classroom, particularly with regard to the provision of information and curriculum access.
- 8.4. Our Accessibility Plan and any updates will be shared with our Cognita Facilities colleague by the Business Manager.
- 8.5. Progress reports are provided termly to our school's compliance committee by the Business Manager and thereafter reported to our Senior Leadership Team.
- 8.6. Any failure to meet target deadlines are reported to the Governance Committee meeting and thereafter reported by exception to UK Compliance Committee.

8 Related Policies, Guidelines, Templates and Forms

- Special Educational Needs;
- Equality & Diversity;
- Allegations of Abuse against Teachers & Other Staff;

- Safeguarding Children including Child Protection;
- Health & Safety; and
- Premises Management.

Next full review by Cognita – September 2018

Reviewed internally, September 2016

APPENDIX 1

Improving the Delivery of Written Information at Oxford House School

The school continues to monitor the implementation of the plan and to review it regularly.

	Targets	Strategies	Outcome	Timeframe	Goals Achieved
Short term	Availability of written material in alternative formats.	The school will make itself aware of the services available for converting written information into alternative formats.	The school will be able to provide written information in different formats when required for individual purposes	Ongoing	Delivery of information to disabled pupils improved.
Medium term	Make available school prospectus, school newsletters and other information for parents in alternative formats	Review all current school publications and promote the availability in different formats for those that require it.	All school information available for all..	Ongoing	Delivery of school information to parents and the local community improved.
	Review documentation with a view of ensuring accessibility for pupils with visual impairment.	Get advice on alternative formats and use IT software to produce customized materials.	All school information available for all.	Ongoing	Delivery of school information to pupils and parents with visual difficulties improved
Long term	Raise the awareness of adults working at and for the school on the importance of good communication systems.	Arrange training courses	Awareness of target group raised	Sept 2015	School is more effective in meeting the needs of pupils

APPENDIX 2

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO ACCESS : A CHECKLIST

This list should help you identify barriers to access that exist in schools. The list is not exhaustive. It is designed to encourage a flexible approach to the further questioning of the accessibility of your school.

Section 1 : How does your school deliver the curriculum?		
Questions	Yes	No
Do you ensure that teachers & teaching assistants have the necessary training to teach and support disabled pupils?	√	
Are your classrooms optimally organized for disabled pupils?		√
Do lessons provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve?		
Are lessons responsive to pupil diversity?	√	
Do lessons involve work to be done by individuals, pairs, groups & the whole class?	√	
Are all pupils encouraged to take part in music, drama & physical activities?	√	
Do staff recognize and allow for the mental effort expended by some disabled pupils, for example using lip reading?	√	
Do staff recognize and allow for the additional time required by some disabled pupils to use equipment in practical work?	√	
Do staff provide alternative ways of giving access to experience or understanding for disabled pupils who cannot engage in particular activities, for example some forms of exercise in physical education?	√	
Do you provide access to computer technology appropriate for students with disabilities?	√	
Are school visits, including overseas visits, made accessible to all pupils irrespective of attainment or impairment?	√	
Are there high expectation of all pupils?	√	
Do staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation?	√	
Section 2 : Is your School designed to meet the needs of all pupils?		
Questions	Yes	No
Does the size and layout of areas – including all academic, sporting, play, social facilities; classrooms; the assembly hall; canteen; library; gymnasium and outdoor sporting facilities;	√	

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playgrounds and common rooms – allow access for all pupils?		
Can pupils who use wheelchairs move around the school without experiencing barriers to access such as those caused by doorways, steps and stairs, toilet facilities and showers?		√
Are pathways of travel around the school site and parking arrangements safe, routes logical and well signed?	√	
Are emergency and evacuation systems set up to inform ALL pupils, including pupils with SEN and disabilities; including alarms with both visual and auditory components?	√	
Are non-visual guides used, to assist people to use buildings including lifts with tactile buttons?		√
Could any of the décor or signage be considered to be confusing or disorientating for disabled pupils with visual impairment, autism or epilepsy?		√
Are areas to which pupils should have access well lit?	√	
Are steps made to reduce background noise for hearing impaired pupils such as considering a room's acoustics and noisy equipment?	√	
Is furniture and equipment selected, adjusted & located appropriately?	√	
Section 3 : How does your School deliver materials in other formats?		
Questions	Yes	No
Could you provide information in simple language, symbols, large print, on audiotape or in Braille for pupils and prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information?	√	
Could you ensure that information is presented to groups in a way which is user friendly for people with disabilities eg, by reading aloud overhead projections and describing diagrams?	√	
Do you have the facilities such as ICT to produce written information in different formats?	√	
Do you ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist people with disabilities?	√	

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE ADMISSION OF DISABLED PUPILS

Appendix 1

Code Assessment: 1-3 reasonable; 4-6 difficult and/or with considerable cost implication; 7-9 prohibitive cost, impractical or impossible

Disability	Assessment	Code	Action	Cost + Time
Wheelchair to Second Floor	Second Floor: Forms III,IV,V&VI: Resource room (design technology, video, pracscience); Form IV classroom; Fire Escape routes. No possible means of access for a person confined to a wheelchair – stairs narrow, steep, turning to this floor; landing too narrow, no possible installation of lift internally or externally; ramp not possible to steps to fire esc route	9	None possible for these facilities, only available and practicable on this floor to the 7-11 years age group	-
Wheelchair to First Floor	First Floor: Forms III,V&VI classrooms; boys toilets. ICT Room, Office, Music Room, girls wc; Staff wc. No possible means of access for a person confined to a wheelchair, although stairs reasonably gentle but with two turns; internal lift physically possible with loss of ground floor wc for use of kitchen staff and first floor boys toilets.	8	None reasonably possible owing to unacceptable loss of accommodation and of cost	-
Wheelchair to Ground Floor	Ground Floor: Forms I & II, Reception, Nursery I and II classrooms; cloakroom, kitchen; staff room; lavatories; tuck shop. Wheelchair access possible through School main door and front door; steps and threshold steps would require a ramp of 6-8ft		Further consideration required as to: a) suitability to teaching	-

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	in length, removable so as not to impede vehicle access for parking nor to create danger to other users. New doors required from porch to hall; ramp required to bridge steps, which would create danger to other users. Access to Forms I&II and Reception. Access to Nursery I and staff room. Access to dining hall would require structural alteration to widen and create wheelchair access. Two cubicle lavatories could be made into one cubicle; however, this would reduce the number of wc's to below that acceptable, and there is no alternative area for additional wc's to compensate. Access to Nursery possible through French windows from playground; small ramp required. Access to lavatories would require the same structural alteration.	7	requirements of wheelchair bound teacher for the Early Learning Years and for Forms I&II, and b) suitability of a place at the School for a pupil who could not transfer to Form III	
Wheelchair to Lower Ground Floor	Lower Ground Floor: Stationery stores; shredding facility, spare uniform store. PE equipment store. Steep stairs with one return. Extreme difficulty for providing lift, without enormous cost and loss of facilities.	8	None reasonably possible owing to loss of accommodation and of cost	-
Wheelchair to off-site facilities	It would be impracticable to be able to offer alternative and appropriate PE facilities for someone who is wheelchair bound. The School would be reliant on the presently hired transport and hired PE facilities being able to receive a wheelchair.	5	None possible owing to reliance on hired transport and facilities, also cost of new minibus with tail lift	-

Physical disability with mobility or some mobility	Access to all four floors might be possible depending upon the level of disability. Handrails are presently available to each staircase. The use of hand or arm crutches would be difficult from ground to lower ground and from first to second floors owing to steepness of the steps and the turns	3	Stairs and handrails to be monitored	As per need
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Sensory impairment	Admission to the School is largely at the age of 2½ -3. The Montessori apparatus is sensorially based at the early learning stage. Severe speech impairment would present difficulties with reading and letter sounds; severe sight impairment with writing; severe hearing impairment would initially be helped by lip reading. A pupil with severe sensory impairments would soon require specific, one to one help, which, owing to their duty of care to the pupils in their care, the teachers in the Lower School could not give. Additional teacher resource would need to be employed in order to give the pupil the necessary and adequate assistance. The admission of such an older pupil would present this School, and the pupil him/herself, with exceptional difficulties from Form III onwards, owing to the nature and layout of the facilities	6	No reasonable action possible in the case of severe sensory impairment. Slight sensory impairment is a disability with which the School could continue to handle.	-
Medium to Long term medical conditions	The School is accustomed to pupils who have, or who develop medical conditions such as allergies and asthma, or whose condition may need general administration of medicines or preparedness for emergency action involving the emergency services. The admission of a pupil with a condition such as leukaemia, haemophilia, epilepsy, diabetes and organ impairments would require specific training within the staff at the appropriate time.	2/4	No sensible additional action needed. Specific training to be triggered as required	As per need
Behavioural and emotional difficulties	It is doubtful whether this School would be an appropriate choice for a parent. It is a small school with small groups or classes, with the likelihood of disturbance and disruption to the other pupils in their academic progression and therefore with limited benefit to the pupil	8	-	-
Learning difficulties and specific special educational needs	The School would need to change its character and nature in order to admit pupils with identified and specific learning difficulties. It would also need to change its stated policy of constructive dialogue with a parent whose child is academically considerably falling behind its peer group and agreement that the child would benefit from a		As changes to the School's present policies would be detrimental to the great majority of the pupils, the School is presently	-

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	different academic environment. The School is recognised as one that aims to stretch its pupils academically and to cater for the average and above average abilities. This is acknowledged through inspection reports, not least in the inspectorate's declaration that the intake in Schools such as Oxford House is broadly well above average intelligence by virtue of its being an independent school. The Montessori method and apparatus was designed to help young people with no formal education. This School has assisted generations of unselected pupils in the early learning stages.	7	unwilling to make such policy changes	
Dissemination of information	In view of the entry age the dissemination of information is more relevant to the parent		-	-