



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Accessibility Plan (Until August 2028) (Incorporating Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy)

Birkenhead School is an independent school which educates and cares for children aged 3 months to 18 years old. The School is academically selective and welcomes all children who can flourish through its curriculum and the many other opportunities the School offers to give children the best possible start in life.

It is the School's aim to enable all students whose academic ability is appropriate to the education the School offers to have equal access to all aspects of that education, as far as is reasonable and possible, and as far as is compatible with the effective education of other children and the reasonable use of resources. The School delivers education in the classroom, sports and other facilities alongside excellent pastoral care and many opportunities outside the curriculum including a wide range of educational visits away from the School's campus.

Treating every child as an individual is important to the School. Students with physical disabilities are welcome, as are those with other Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) who have the aptitude to benefit from the curriculum (and assuming the School can provide the help and support they require).

To this end the School keeps under review the School's policies, procedures and facilities.

The School's Accessibility Plan involves the following sections, which should all be read in the context of the School's ability to provide reasonable adjustments (see Appendix A):

1. Admissions
2. Access to the physical environment of the School
3. Access for students with specific learning difficulties and/or learning disabilities (SEND) to the School curriculum
4. Access to information

It is supplemented with the facilities audit considering physical disabilities and access (Appendix B) and an outline of various modifications to the service provision that are likely to assist those with particular disabilities and/or special educational needs (Appendix C). A list of resources used/consulted in the preparation of the policy is also attached in Appendix C.

For EYFS families, this policy should be read in conjunction with the EYFS SEND statement.

Admissions

Birkenhead School selects its students on the basis of their academic aptitude, attitude, desire to learn and their ability to benefit from the curriculum offered by the setting. While the School's Early Years Foundation Stage is required to be fully inclusive, it is important that Birkenhead School offer a place to children based on the setting being able to provide appropriate support and reasonable adjustments for the child to make expected progress.

In applying its selection criteria, the School seeks to uphold or enhance its educational and pastoral standards, in line with its ethos. The School must be reasonably confident that it can meet the needs of students and support their development in line with the standards and wellbeing of the wider student body, enabling a positive and fulfilling school experience. These criteria must continue to be met for the duration of the student's placement.

Suitability for entry to the Prep and Early Years department varies according to age but may include one or more of the following: assessment via tests, examination of schoolwork, a day spent with a class in School, and references from current school.

Academic suitability for Seniors is assessed internally in the June of Year 5, taking into consideration previous internal examinations, alongside attitude, behaviour and teachers' references. External candidates are considered via an entrance examination during Assessment Days, or, at other points of entry through a Taster Day during which the candidate will be observed in a classroom setting, undertake Verbal Reasoning, Mathematical and Literacy tests, and have a short interview with a senior member of staff. Reports and/or references from candidates' present schools are also requested. Academic suitability for entrance to the Sixth Form is via interview, school reports and GCSE performance.

The School's policy is to apply these admissions criteria to all students and potential students regardless of any disability, making reasonable adjustments to the process where possible.

As such, parents of prospective students are asked, on application to the School, to inform the Headmaster or Head of Prep of any special educational needs, disabilities or long-term medical conditions and the implications thereof which the School should consider, either in the selection process or once a student has been accepted. In assessing any student or prospective student, and in considering any reasonable adjustments needed the School will seek relevant advice and may require additional assessments from external professionals where deemed appropriate. The School will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

Where private diagnostic reports and/or assessments are submitted, the School will undertake appropriate due diligence to verify their credibility. The decision to accept such reports or assessments from specific practitioners shall remain at the sole discretion of the School. Reasonable adjustments to the admissions procedure which the School will consider will depend on individual circumstances. Admissions decisions are ultimately made by the School, subject to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Access to the Physical Environment of the School

Birkenhead School was established in 1871 at its current location and it covers a wide area – primarily on one campus, with two additional sports facilities. It consists of many separate buildings, some built recently with more accessibility. However, there are a number of older buildings, including listed buildings and those with several storeys.

The School, in common with many others, has established fixed classrooms for several subjects enabling the concentration of specialist resources and facilities in one place. It is recognised that a student with mobility difficulties may be put at a disadvantage as a result. An audit of accessibility (see

Appendix B) indicates where reasonable adjustments can be made to improve access to some facilities. There remain some areas where major alterations would be required at significant cost which would seriously impact the School's financial resources and therefore its ability to successfully educate its students. Where developments of the School estate are undertaken, opportunities will exist to further improve accessibility: the School remains committed to providing the best possible environment for its students.

Within the context of physical education, aspects of the School's curriculum and other activities, reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible. When making reasonable adjustments, student needs will be considered, alongside staffing, other resources and the activity itself.

General access to the School is supported by a full-time School Nurse, who provides immediate care and coordinates with students, parents, and staff to manage known medical conditions effectively. This ensures that most medical needs do not impede access to the curriculum or wider school activities. The Catering Team also works closely with the School Nurse and parents to accommodate special dietary requirements.

Access for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties and/or Learning Disabilities (SEND) to the School Curriculum

Birkenhead School provides high quality educational provision, and a varied curriculum, delivered in a range of classrooms, playrooms and sports settings, supported by excellent pastoral care, an extensive co-curricular programme and educational visits.

All the children benefit from high quality teaching with relatively small class sizes and, a high level of adaptive teaching and differentiated learning opportunities. This enables individual learning for all, including those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. The School recognises that additional support may be required for some children to fully access the curriculum.

Birkenhead School has high aspirations and expectations for all children, which is supported by clear communication and a mutual vision between parents and School. The School's approach involves identifying any additional learning needs at the earliest stage possible, as well as listening to, and working collaboratively with parents to meet needs. Children are assessed at various stages throughout their education to ensure that progress is at least at the expected level. Observations on progress and specific needs will be discussed with parents and where further professional advice may be needed the School will work with external professionals who can support.

The School seeks to adapt its curriculum where possible to the individual needs of students. Special Educational Needs requirements are established by the SEND Co-ordinator in collaboration with school staff, and external professionals where needed.

The school maintains a SEND Register, which is an internal working document and includes relevant information to support staff to support their students. The SEND Co-ordinator and Assistant SENDCos, alongside the School Nurse, play a crucial role where health and SEND are concerned. This involves liaising with parents, external professionals where necessary, caring for students and informing and educating staff. Some of the steps likely to be appropriate upon the identification of specific educational needs and disabilities are listed in Appendix C.

The School follows a Graduated Approach; Assess, Plan, Do, Review. This Approach begins with identifying and assessing needs, personalised planning (Play Plans, Individual Education Plans/Student Support Plans or Pupil Profiles created), actioning the plan, then reviewing plans - often termly. Some may be reviewed more frequently, some less so – depending on need. Where Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) are in place, there may be more regular assessment of need to meet long-term outcomes

and support progress. EHCPs are formally reviewed on an annual basis with the Local Authority who holds responsibility for the EHCP.

Parents should be aware that, unlike mainstream state schools, Birkenhead School does not receive any delegated SEND funding or any part of the 'SEND notional budget' from the Local Authority. All additional SEND funding required to resource provision in an EHCP is the Local Authority's responsibility. The School cannot normally accept parental/guardian offers to fund Teaching Assistants, Learning Support Assistants or make-up any shortfall in provision. Students with an EHCP where Birkenhead School has agreed they can meet Needs, will not normally be able to start at Birkenhead School until the Local Authority have agreed in writing that they will be resourcing all Provision set out in Section F.

Where Birkenhead School cannot meet Needs, this will be communicated to the Local Authority and to parents/guardians. There may be occasions where Birkenhead School has agreed they can meet a student's Needs with additional resources provided by the Local Authority, but as a student's educational journey progresses, it becomes evident that this is no longer the case. Should this happen, the Local Authority would be notified along with parents/guardians. Similarly, should Birkenhead School be unable to meet a student's Needs based on the placement being incompatible with the effective education of others, this would also be communicated to the Local Authority and parents/guardians.

In addition to adaptive teaching, differentiated learning opportunities and reasonable adjustments to provision within the classroom, the School has specially qualified staff who can provide study skills. Study Skills teachers have experience of working on a 1:1 basis with students with a range of Special Educational Needs/Disabilities. Sessions are provided at an additional cost, with a published termly fee, which is subsidised by general fee income in recognition of the value to the wider school community of this contribution to an inclusive approach.

Access to Information

The School recognises the importance of information sharing and prides itself on effective communication. Effective communication differs from frequent communication and staff will use professional judgement to ensure best practice. Access to information for students and parents/guardians may include but is not limited to:

1. The provision of classroom media projectors and interactive whiteboards.
2. Photocopies/electronic copies of information for those for whom transcribing takes considerable time. Electronic resources are available via the School network.
3. Extensive Wi-Fi and use of personal tablet devices ("Bring Your Own Device") has been implemented in Seniors and is part of the educational offering. Where necessary access to a device is available in Prep.
4. Information available on the School website or VLE (currently Firefly), which already includes menus, timetable and homework information. In the EYFS, termly agendas are accessible online as well as being hand delivered to parents. This can then be accessed in large font on screen. In Infants, termly agendas are both posted on dojo and handed out at the beginning of each term.
5. The School website and internal network sites are clearly presented and easy to use.
6. Office staff are available throughout the School day to provide information verbally. Pre-Prep and Reception currently use EYLog; Years 1 & 2 use iTrack. EYLog provides an electronic learning journal that is available for parents to track and view online.

Reasonable Adjustments

Birkenhead School is committed to treating its students and applicants fairly, in line with the Equality Act 2010, alongside other relevant regulations and guidance. Furthermore, the Equality Act 2010 confirms a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students and applicants are not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with students and applicants who are not disabled.

The Act defines disability as suffering from a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The School seeks to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that students and applicants with a disability are not put at a substantial disadvantage in receiving the education and services provided by the School.

Reasonable Adjustments may include:

- Modifications to the School's policies, practices, or procedures; and
- The provision of auxiliary aids or services, such as additional support or assistive technologies, where these help to reduce or remove substantial disadvantage

Some examples are provided in the following pages relating to admissions, physical access and additional learning needs. There can, however, be no standard definition, and, while striving to identify needs and deciding upon adjustments, the School welcomes the involvement of parents/guardians in discussions. Parents should meet and discuss their child's needs with the SEND Co-ordinator in Nursery, Prep or Seniors and together with other staff members where necessary, adjustments may be identified and discussions on how the School could reasonably put it into practice will take place. The School, as the education provider and with staff who have considerable qualifications and experience, retains the primacy to make the final decisions on provision and adjustments.

When the School is able to make proposed adjustments, they will be put into place as promptly as is reasonable. In other cases, for example where the adjustment would be logistically complex or come at a considerable financial cost, greater consideration of how best to overcome any substantial disadvantage that might otherwise be suffered may be required, as well as consideration given to the measures it is reasonable for the School to take. The School may seek input on these decisions from teachers, other external agencies, as well as the child involved and their parents/guardians.

When considering whether it would be reasonable to make a particular adjustment, the School will consider the following factors:

- the extent to which it would overcome the substantial disadvantage
- the practicability of the adjustment
- the effect of the disability on the student
- the cost of the proposed adjustment
- whether it will be provided through an Educational Health Care Plan or support from an external /professional
- the School's resources (provided primarily by fee income)
- health and safety requirements
- the need to maintain academic, musical, sporting and other standards
- the interests of other students (and potential students)

Where it is decided that adjustments cannot be made, the School will write to the parents/guardians involved, with reasons for such a decision. Parents/Guardians of a child with a disability will not be charged for any reasonable adjustments.

Facilities Accessibility Audit

External access to campus is level, although some entrances are gravelled. Stable access: Dining Hall/Chapel/Prep; Overdale; K Block; Sixth Form Building (rear); Little School; Pre-Prep; Prep Gym; Prep New Building (2009); Old School House.

An advantage of the School site is that there is direct vehicle access to a large number of buildings: Nursery; Pre-Prep; New Prep Building; main entrance of old Prep building; Music School; Prep Gym; Dining Hall; Chapel; Library; Overdale; Science and Technology; Bushell Hall; McAllester Building; Sixth Form Building (rear); Sports Hall.

Most buildings have both internal and external level changes. Most changes of level outdoors can be avoided by taking alternative routes (e.g. K Block).

Our experience of providing for the needs of physically disabled students has largely been through the experience of students temporarily disabled through injury and this has provided a useful model. Reasonable adjustments have been made to timetables and rooming, in consultation with the member of staff and/or student concerned and their parents to ensure that no-one is placed at a substantial disadvantage. Arrangements have also been made to avoid students having to carry books and equipment around the campus, using designated carriers, for example, or by providing spare sets of books in relevant classrooms.

The issue of access is relevant not only to students with a disability, but to prospective students with a disability, and to parents and visitors who may wish to visit the School on Open Days or at other times. The definition of what is reasonable will be different in each case. The School will gather advance information to be able to consider reasonable adjustments. Several temporary ramps have been acquired and are available to be put to use.

Sections in bold indicate no disabled access and no obvious “reasonable adjustments”

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Library	No	Some books are kept in department areas, where further relevant books could be relocated if required		As required
Meeting Room (exams, assemblies)	Yes		A permanent ramp was put in place during refurbishment of the building Summer 2023	
Overdale classrooms	No	K-Block classrooms	A gradual ramp (likely required to extend along two sides of the building)	Long

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
			could provide access to the ground floor classrooms; toilet is then accessible	
Overdale indoor recreation facilities	No			
Overdale outdoor recreation facilities	Yes			
New Science	Yes - Ground Floor (Ramp) Not 1st Floor	Lower floor labs identical to upper floor		As required
New Science Toilet	Yes – designated disabled toilet			
Old Science - Physics	External access via New Science block & Physics Prep Room	Temporary external ramp – 3 steps; use double door		As required
Technology Labs	No external access; internal levels ok		Temporary external ramp – 3 steps; use double door	As required
Old Science - Chemistry (1st Floor)	No	Ground Floor labs could be used for many lessons		As required
Old Science toilets	No	New Science, 6th Form, Bushell Hall or Library close at hand		As required
Sixth Form facilities / English Classrooms	Direct access rear (canteen), but then internal steps to access main rooms. No access to upper floors	Ramps can be provided to rear door(s), giving access to all ground floor rooms, except the overflow study/storage room		As required

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Sixth Form Cafeteria	Yes			
Sixth Form Toilets	Disabled toilet accessible at ground level	Female and male toilets also available in Hall adjacent.		
Economics	No	K Block or other classrooms have the same facilities.		As required
Bushell Hall	Yes		A permanent ramp was put in place during Summer 2022 to assist with the small step at the main entrance	
Hall Toilet	Yes - plus separate disabled facility			
Languages & Classics	No	Alternative classrooms available, with modification for some lessons		As required
McAllester Common Rooms	No		Following minor refurbishment of the McAllester 'atrium' during Summer '24, consideration of disabled access will be given to this space during the 2025-26 academic year	
Art rooms	No	Required art resources could be relocated to another classroom / facility		
K-Block – 6 ground floor classrooms	Yes – from east end			
K-Block toilets	Yes, although not adapted			
K-Block – four 1st floor classrooms + Computer Suite	No	Computing could be taught in DT area.	Hoist/chair lift would give access to key facility plus extra classrooms which might then provide flexibility elsewhere. Plan for modifications to this	Long

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
			building in due course – could include lift	
Playgrounds	Yes			
Sports Hall – ground floor areas	Yes			
Sports Hall – gallery, fitness suite	No	Some equipment is movable to the ground floor		Planning permission to substantially extend this facility including lift access to the first floor has been granted – August 2022
Pavilion	No	Facilities available in neighbouring Sports Hall		As required
Pre-Prep	Yes			
Pre-Prep toilet	Yes			
Little School	Yes	Some classrooms have direct access from outside, including Reception		
Little School toilet	Yes			
Old School House	No	Ramps would be required at front door to main house. Classes could be relocated to Little School		As required
Prep Gym	Yes			
Prep Gym changing room	Yes			

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
New Prep Building	Yes – ground floor only. Computer room on First floor not accessible		IT facilities can be made available elsewhere due to increased network	
Years 3-6 toilets	Yes, but no specific disabled toilet		Convert present adult toilet to disabled access	Long
Year 3/4	No	Classrooms are flexible; classes can be moved		As required
Big School entrance Hall, Staff Room, Medical Centre	Yes – via New Building			
Staff Toilet	Yes			
Prep Hall, Art Room	No	Relocation of lessons / activities where possible to other classrooms / Bushell Hall / Chapel	Installation of handrails undertaken but lift / stair lift impractical in listed building	No plans
Year 6 classrooms	Yes – from Chapel End			
Uniform Shop	Yes			
Dining Hall	Yes - via Beresford Road or ramp from School Field; one step into Hall		Solid path needed along jumping track at bottom of Field to link main path with ramp. Temporary ramp required at entrance door	Long As required
Dining Hall toilets	No.	Toilet in kitchen can be accessed on same level		

FACILITY	DISABLED ACCESS	ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE MODIFICATION	TERM
Chapel	No – external access to vestibule enables service to be heard; but then internal steps	A temporary access ramp is available		
Music Dept	No	No	Installation of lift appears impractical in this listed Victorian building	
McAllester Pavilion	Yes	The pavements are wheelchair adapted, but gravel entrance: vehicle can be brought to solid paved surface.		
McAllester Field pitches.	Yes, via soft grassed surface or via Townfield Lane entrance & path		Complete hard link from pitch entrance to present path	Long
Noctorum Field	Field – Yes Pavilion - No		Temporary ramp could be provided to enable access	As required
Nursery	Yes: Ramp to the doors and ground floor access for wheelchairs from the entrance via the garden. Also access from the Under 2's room to the garden. Toddlers room: No	Toddlers room can be accessed by small children by using an evacuation chair. Handrails and non-slip edges have been attached to stairs to assist.	Costings for stair lift and elevators has been sought.	Long Term if need arises
Nursery Toilet	Downstairs toilets available		Costings to convert into a disabled toilet have been sought	Long Term if need arises

LEARNING DIFFICULTY / DISABILITY/DIFFERENCE	ADJUSTMENTS AVAILABLE / CONSIDERED	TERM
Visual impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large print books / online materials • Coloured paper available • Staircases all have non-slip edging • Enlarged worksheets and exam papers • Use of ICT with image magnification • Clear signage on buildings and classroom doors • Improved lighting in classrooms • Amanuensis/readers for examinations • Voice recognition programmes 	Most already available – lighting improvement is a continuing programme.
Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students to sit in a space appropriate to meet their needs; use of voice enhancement devices as appropriate • British Sign Language and Makaton are used in EYFS 	As required
Other physical disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist furniture to be considered for individual need – Current equipment includes Breezi Chairs being used in Little school and the dining room. 	As required
Diabetes and other life-threatening medical conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Nurse available throughout school day, developing individual care plans • Staff trained to deal with critical incidents, administer medication etc. • Staff given clear instructions on dealing with critical incidents • Parents allowed to accompany children on trips if necessary • Caterers work with Nurse and parents to accommodate dietary needs • Large notices with photos alerting staff are posted in staff rooms • All staff in Nursery are fully trained in Paediatric First Aid 	Always available

Learning Difficulty/Disability/Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality First Teaching Strategies to meet specific Needs • Study Skills programme available from Year 7 to best equip students to cope with the demands of the curriculum and to develop lifelong skills; additional cost attached with subsidy from School • Early identification through internal informal observations and assessments in Early Years and Prep along with more formal assessments as they progress through the school • Transition planning with staff when moving between Year groups and Key Stages • Exam Access Arrangements in accordance with guidelines • Information sharing with parents, students and key staff to review progress and adjust strategies where needed • Discussions with external professionals. • Regular professional development for staff on SEND • Additional Provision where needed and where School can meet Needs, may be funded through an EHCP 	<p>As needed</p> <p>Training provided on a variety of SEND needs as needed (mixture of internal and external inputs)</p>
Prolonged or persistent absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Resources containing lesson materials, revision resources and homework. • Parent Portal providing information on timetable and homework set • Work collected and marked with support from the School Office • Reduced curriculum may be agreed • Special access arrangements for public examinations e.g. sitting the exams at home, rest breaks, extra time (in accordance with JCQ guidelines). 	As needed

Mental Health Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and support from pastoral team and led by School Nurse, SEND Co-ordinator and/or Head of Year when appropriate • Referrals made by School Nurse to CAMHS and/or Health Services in Schools Team • Reduced curriculum may be agreed • Consideration given to homework load with possibility to not require a student to hand in work until they are well • Multi-Agency Meetings with relevant staff and specialists as needed • Transition planning when moving between Year groups and Key Stages • Raising general awareness through School PSHE programme and Mental Health Peer Mentor Scheme • Nurture group available and opportunities for 1:1 Sessions with the School Nurse 	Advice from Health Services in Schools Team.
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Regulations and Guidance considered in the formation / review of this policy

- Equality Act 2010 (General provisions and Schedule 11)
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- What Equality Law Means for You as an Education Provider: Schools
- Schools Technical Guidance
- Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils
- Department for Education
- The Equality Act 2010 and schools
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
- Independent Schools Bursars' Association (including assistance from Farrer and Co.)
- Independent Schools Inspectorate Handbook for the Inspection of Independent Schools – The Regulatory Requirements
- Online materials published by the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

HM 30th September 2025. To be reviewed September 2026