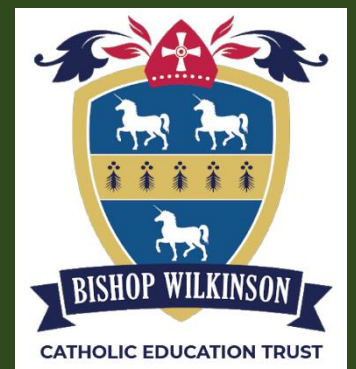




**St. Joseph's Catholic
Infant & Junior Schools
Birtley**

**Equality and Accessibility
Strategy**

September 2023



Statement of intent



St. Joseph's
Catholic Infant
& Junior Schools
Birtley



OUR MISSION

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone, to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

All are welcome in this place.

OUR VISION

Lord, in our daily lives, may we:

Love and serve like St. Joseph, care and protect like St. Joseph, work and teach like St. Joseph, show compassion and loyalty like St. Joseph, have trust and faith like St. Joseph.

We follow St. Joseph's virtues and remember our significance in God's world. Amen.



St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, Birtley takes the health and wellbeing of its pupils very seriously. As described in the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school aims to support pupils with physical disabilities and illnesses to enable them to have a full and rich academic life whilst at school.

The local governing committee recognises its duties and responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act 2010, which states that any pupil with an impairment affecting their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities must not be discriminated against.

Pupils will always be treated with care, sensitivity and respect when intimate care is given, and no pupil will be left feeling embarrassed or as if they have created a problem.

Disability & Equality Scheme/Accessibility Plan

Aims:

Our main aim is to offer an education appropriate to each individual pupil's needs, regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity or religious beliefs.

- We aim to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for all our pupils, and the opportunity to reach levels of attainment appropriate to their ability. We regard all our pupils as being of equal value and to ensure that the needs of all pupils are identified and met, and that they are able to achieve their full potential, helping to raise standards across the Trust.
- We aim to ensure that active encouragement is given to all pupils in order to enable them to fully develop talents and personal skills for co-operative interaction and academic excellence. No one person has the right to deny another person their educational opportunity.
- We aim to ensure that everyone at the schools, (staff, pupils, parents, carers, contractors and visitors) are afforded the basic rights of freedom and access to opportunity, including freedom from all forms of harassment or bullying.

Where contractors are working on-site, measures will be taken to ensure, as far as possible, that their employees operate according to the school's policies.

We aim to challenge in a positive way any form of prejudice, racism or sexism, whether overt or covert, which contradicts the school equality objectives. This means adopting a consistent and unambiguous stand, from which we strive to overcome prejudice and ensure equality of opportunity for all, thus protecting the rights and liberties of every individual.

We aim to create and retain a workforce that is valued for its diverse contributions and represents different perspectives, ethnic backgrounds, experience and skills. To achieve this, the schools will maintain strong community/parental links, and governors will give support to the schools and all their stakeholders, to ensure an effective educational delivery.

Vision, Values and Ethos:

An Accessibility Plan has been drawn based upon information supplied by the Local Authority, and in conjunction with pupils, parents, staff and governors of the school and will advise other school planning documents. The Accessibility Plan will be reported upon annually in respect of progress and outcomes.

2. The Accessibility Plan is structured to complement and support the school's Equality Objectives, and will similarly be published on the school website. We understand that the LA will monitor the school's activity under the Equality Act 2010 (and in particular Schedule 10 regarding Accessibility) and will advise upon the compliance with that duty.

3. We are committed to providing an environment that enables full curriculum access that values and includes all pupils, staff, parents and visitors regardless of their education, physical, sensory, social, spiritual, emotional

and cultural needs. We are committed to taking positive action in the spirit of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to disability and to developing a culture of inclusion, support and awareness within the school.

4. St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior School Accessibility Plan shows how access is to be continually monitored and improved where possible for disabled pupils, staff and visitors to the school in a given timeframe and anticipating the need to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs where practicable. The Accessibility Plan will contain relevant and timely actions to:

- Increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a disability, expanding the curriculum as necessary to ensure that pupils with a disability are as, equally, prepared for life as are the able-bodied pupils; this covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or school visits – it also covers the provision of specialist or auxiliary aids and equipment, which may assist these pupils in accessing the curriculum within a reasonable timeframe;
- Improve access to the physical environment of the school, adding specialist facilities as necessary – this covers improvements to the physical environment of the school and physical aids to access education within a reasonable timeframe;
- Improve the delivery of written information to pupils, staff, parents and visitors with disabilities; examples might include handouts, timetables, textbooks and information about the school and school events; the information should be made available in various preferred formats within a reasonable timeframe.

5. The Accessibility Plan relates to the key aspects of physical environment, curriculum and written information.

6. Whole-school training will recognise the need to continue raising awareness for staff and governors on equality issues with reference to the Equality Act 2010.

7. The Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with all other school policies, strategies and documents:

- Curriculum Policy
- Health & Safety Policy (including off-site safety)
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- School Improvement Plan
- DCC produced Asset Management Plan
- Prospectus

Our school is committed to the principles of inclusion. We have a caring, supportive ethos that seeks to value all individuals. Our school promotes equality of opportunity for disabled people: pupils, staff, parents, carers and others who use our school. By promoting a positive attitude towards disabled people we aim to eliminate discrimination and harassment related to disability and thereby fulfil an essential component of our ethos.

We will involve disabled people in informing the direction our school takes to promote equality of opportunity and accessibility to the school environment. We also seek to encourage full participation of disabled people in the school community even if this requires more favourable treatment.

Our school aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum in a happy, challenging environment where each pupil can develop to the maximum of his/ her potential and feel valued as an individual who can contribute to the life of our school and society in general.

We promote:

- pupil self-confidence so that each pupil develops a sense of personal worth and is confident in his/her ability to succeed.
- positive relationships to help pupils develop good relations with others, based on mutual respect and consideration, and an understanding of, and a tolerance towards various races, religions and cultures.
- co-operation to develop the abilities of pupils to contribute as members of groups and recognising their responsibilities.
- self-discipline so that pupils understand the need for high standards of behaviour and to develop responsibility towards people and property.

The Legal Context:

The SEND Code of Practice (2014 DfE and DHSC) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995) sets out a general duty to promote disability and a specific duty to publish a disability equality scheme alongside an Accessibility Plan. It requires schools to be more proactive in their approach to promoting disability equality and eliminating discrimination. Our definition of disability defines a disabled person as someone who has:

'a physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

This definition covers a wide range of impairments, including hidden impairments: such as dyslexia, autism, speech and language impairments, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These are all likely to amount to a disability, only if the effect is on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The duty puts greater focus on approaches to policy development and management of issues in relation to disability.

Part 4 of the DDA requires that the governing body increase access to education for disabled pupils. Our school has produced, with this scheme, an Accessibility Plan, which identifies actions based on our self-evaluation that will promote opportunities for participating in the curriculum; accessing the building and services and delivery of information to pupils and adults.

From this, the following key guidelines emerge:

- All pupils should be encouraged to value their own cultural heritage and the culture and lifestyles of others, and to show respect for self and others while at the same time finding common ground to talk to one another and valuing living together in a community.
- Every member of staff needs to accept responsibility for establishing a reasonable climate for debate and extending opportunities for controversial discussion. They must address widely held misconceptions to avoid the risk of pupils with limited experience arriving at consensus views of doubtful validity.
- The provision of genuine equality of opportunity must be inherent in the education the schools offer. The curriculum opportunities must be open to all [and post-16 provision must give access for all sexes to all subjects]. The schools must challenge any gender stereotyping, which leads to constraints on the development of pupils' abilities and aspirations and should include the opportunity to study multicultural issues as an intrinsic part of all programmes and teaching.
- The schools should clearly demonstrate the unacceptability of attitudes, incidents, taunts or remarks that offend, intimidate, devalue another's view or opinion, or undermine another's self-esteem.

More specifically, this means the following codes of practice for governors and staff, pupils, parents/carers and visitors and contract staff.

Governors and Staff:

- Staff will treat each other and all pupils with respect.
- Staff will examine the ideas and images in books and other resources, and will challenge negative images and give all pupils positive images.
- Policies on displays, notices, meals, uniform, etc in the schools will reflect their multi-racial population.
- Attendance at in-service training courses on equal opportunities will be encouraged. Staff will make every effort to understand the origins and nature of racism, disability, sexism and other forms of prejudice to recognise their own prejudice where it exists.
- The school values the fact that many pupils are bilingual and will encourage the teaching and/or use of community languages.
- Positive links will be developed with the homes of pupils and communities from which our pupils come. Preventing and dealing with discriminatory behaviour, abuse, bullying and intimidation is the responsibility of us all. The school will support victims of such incidents, on or off the premises.

Pupils:

- Pupils will treat each other and staff with respect.
- All pupils are valued for themselves and can expect to have their culture and language treated positively and with respect.
- Pupils will be given the opportunity in the classroom to discuss and to identify and understand racism, sexism, disability and other forms of prejudice.
- If pupils feel they have been abused racially or bullied they should report the matter immediately to their Classroom Teacher / Pastoral Tutor / Head of House. All pupils can expect to be listened to and have their complaints investigated. If a pupil feels their complaint has not been properly dealt with they may take the matter to the Head Teacher.

- Pupils who have suffered racist or sexist behaviour, abuse, bullying or intimidation will be supported by the school and in particular by their class teacher. Anyone who has committed such offences will be managed in conjunction with the Behaviour and Relationships policy.

Parents/Carers, Visitors and Contract Staff:

- Parents/carers are very important to the school and in particular they have much to contribute to the single equality scheme; their views are welcomed and valued at all times. We ask that all parents/carers fully support the school's single equality scheme.
- The school will discuss with parents/carers any incidents of racist, disability, sexist abuse or bullying and harassment incidents in which their children have been involved.
- If parents/carers are aware of incidents of racism, sexism or bullying then they should contact their child's class teacher.
- Any visitors or contract staff visiting or working at the school who become aware of any incidents of racism, sexism, disability or other discrimination should report them to the Executive Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or Designated Safeguarding Lead. They should also abide by the Code of Conduct established by the Trust.

Involvement of pupils, staff, parents/carers, governors, agencies and service providers:

Over the years, pupils in our school, including our school council, have provided their views to the group on accessibility issues and the school provision. From the Annual Review of pupil Education Health Care Plans, we collate pupil and parent views to inform our scheme. Through respectful relationships with disabled pupils, we acknowledge their feelings and respond to their views.

Where we have disabled staff, parents and service providers we will provide a response to suggestions on how we can improve our disability scheme and its priorities. This would inform considerations that may be required to make reasonable adjustments.

We will seek to record views of external agencies, voluntary groups and services we procure to inform our disability equality scheme and make any necessary adjustments.

An annual report, identifying priorities for school action, will be provided by the working group and passed on to the governing body.

Information gathering in relation to the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees:

Our school will follow Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust guidance on the collection of information on disabled employees and the recruitment of new staff. The local authority human resources database has a record of those staff that have indicated whether they have a disability. Other information in school will be analysed to ensure that there is no discriminatory practice and will take into account the following: seniority, TLR payments, permanency of staff, CPD, disciplinary and capability proceedings, harassment and bullying, sickness and those leaving the profession early. Those staff that voluntarily provide information will be assured that it is used confidentially to inform working practice and conditions.

All staff will be supported by the local authority/Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust agreed policies on sickness and returning to work. Our school would seek to contact the 'Access to work' scheme to explore possible support to staff, if required during their employment.

The educational opportunities available to, and achievements of, disabled pupils:

The school maintains a pupil tracking system, which provides current data on pupil attainment and achievement. This system also provides specific information on pupil disability and attainment. Pupils with a disability will be registered on admission to St Joseph's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools or, during their time with us, should their disability develop at a later stage. Information will be collected through the transfer of records from previous schools, the local authority and parents to ascertain pupil needs and levels of attainment and achievement in order that consideration is given to provision and access to curriculum. Further detail is available in our school's SEND and Admissions Policies.

In order that pupils have full access to the curriculum the school will prioritise aspects of the school Accessibility Plan so that pupils with a disability are ensured greater participation in the curriculum.

Consideration will be given to the management of pupils with medical needs and their care plans to access the curriculum.

We will embrace all disabilities including those due to (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- HIV
- Multiple sclerosis
- Hearing or sight impairments
- Mobility difficulties
- Mental health or learning difficulties

Accessibility Arrangements Plan:

Both sites are single storey and have accessible entrances. St. Joseph's Catholic Infant School can be accessed via one step, or on the 'flat' via the main entrance, if required. St. Joseph's Catholic Junior School has a refurbished ramp to support any mobility issues. The schools are also able to access the Low Incident Needs Team (LINT) via Gateshead Local Authority's SEND team support. For those pupils who may have a disability (e.g. sight or hearing loss), by way of referral, the LINT team are able to support the pupil and school in promoting inclusion. For example, this may be by suggesting an appropriate radio receiver and amplifier for a pupil who has encountered hearing loss (e.g. Phonak device) or it may be that the Occupational Therapy Team will be able to support the pupil with mobility or seating arrangements should they have a registered neurodisability.

In case of an emergency, any pupil with a registered disability will receive an emergency evacuation plan to ensure that their needs are met in the event of an emergency (for example – fire).

Curriculum adaptation:

The following questions would be considered to identify priorities:

- Are there areas of the curriculum to which a disabled pupil has limited or no access?
- Are pupils fully participating in extra-curricular activities?
- How are we addressing those areas of the school building that are not accessible to disabled pupils, staff or others?
- What forms of communication can we provide for pupils and adults?
- Does our written information allow greater access to the curriculum and information on our school?
- Are we monitoring policies and practice? e.g. administration of medicines, staff development on inclusion areas, incidents that may affect disabled pupils

Impact, reviewing and reporting on our strategies:

The scheme will be monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed annually with the SEND policy and Accessibility Plan. The review of the scheme will cover:

- Information on attainment and achievement for those pupils with a disability.
- Current pupils, staffing and others who are registered with a disability.
- A record of the progress made against the school Accessibility Plan.
- Adjustments that are to be considered in the school SEN policy which would cover staffing and provision.
- Priorities that would be included in the school's self-evaluation form and improvement plan.

Governors receive an annual report on the school's performance, which contain a summary of the priorities and strategies are overleaf.

Action/Target	Responsibilities	Costs
1. Language translations on request, when appropriate	SENDCO/Office staff	School budget
2. Continue referrals to specialist services	SENDCo	Time of SENDCo
3. Publishing news sheet termly and add to website, when appropriate	Office staff	School budget via office staff

There are two designated lead professionals for the disability equality scheme (DES), who in addition to the annual review, will also ensure that disabled school members are involved in discussions about policy or practice changes that occur at times during the year – these are the schools' SENDCos (see staff list for further details). These DES staff can be contacted by telephone or via teachers@sjib.bwcet.com or teachers@sjib.bwcet.com.