



Heath Mount School

Equality and Accessibility Plan

1st April 2024 – 31st March 2027

Heath Mount School, Hertfordshire

**Independent Day and Boarding School for Boys
and Girls**

April 2024

This document meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 defines an individual as disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on his or her ability to undertake normal day to day activities.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice. 'long-term' is defined as a 'year or more' and 'substantial' is defined as 'more than minor or trivial'. The definition includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for pupils with disabilities under the Equality Act 2010, to alleviate any substantial disadvantage that a disabled pupil faces in comparison with non-disabled pupils. This can include, for example, the provision of an auxiliary aid or adjustments to premises.

1. **Ethos and aims**

- 1.1 Heath Mount School ("The School") has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to be non-discriminatory towards its pupils and provide equal access to the curriculum, pastoral care, and extra-curricular activities. The equality and accessibility duty thereby provides a framework for identifying pupil needs and weighing them against other educational priorities when making relevant decisions including those decisions on participation in School activities. The School also has an extended duty of care to all employees or visitors on the site whether parents, carers, visitors or alumni.
- 1.2 The School welcomes the duty to eliminate discrimination against anyone with "protected characteristics" and foster good relations, irrespective of gender, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, religion and belief, sexual identity or orientation, gender reassignment / transgender, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or state of maternity (in the case of employees of the School, this also includes age) whether actual, perceptual or by association.
- 1.3 Promoting equal opportunities is fundamental to the aims and ethos of Heath Mount School. We welcome applications from those with as diverse a range of backgrounds as possible. This enriches our community and is vital in preparing our pupils for today's world. We concentrate on educating the individual, to provide a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere where each individual feels valued and can flourish.
- 1.4 The School has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any pupil with a protected characteristic or prospective pupil with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who are not disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic.
- 1.5 The School requires parents to inform the School in the relevant section of the application form of any disability or need: the School cannot guarantee to make provision if that need has not been disclosed.

In assessing any prospective pupil, the School may take such advice and require such assessments (e.g., an Educational Psychologist's report) and recommendations it deems appropriate.

- 1.6 Not all pupils with Special Educational Needs will be classified as having a Disability and vice-versa.

2. **Scope of the plan**

- 2.1 The School's Accessibility Plan contains relevant actions to:
 - 2.1.1 increase the extent to which all pupils with protected characteristics can participate in the School's curriculum;
 - 2.1.2 improve the School's physical environment 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 within the constraints of local planning permission and budget, recognising that some possible improvements are

unlikely to be considered as reasonable adjustments if their costs to the School are prohibitive or if the building can't be adapted due to its Grade 1 listed status;

- 2.1.3 improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled;
- 2.1.4 ensure that the School makes reasonable adjustments not to put any pupil with a protected characteristic or prospective pupil with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who are not disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic.
- 2.2 The plan is reviewed annually by the relevant Governors sub-committees to:
 - 2.2.1 make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in many aspects to pupils or prospective pupils with protected characteristics by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future;
 - 2.2.2 prepare the School's Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties Policy.
 - 2.2.3 ensure the School's Equal Opportunities Policy and other policies and guidelines will have regard for inclusiveness and the difficulties faced by those with protected characteristics, thereby improving understanding and integration;
 - 2.2.4 review such plans and policies as necessary and at least on a triennial basis.
- 2.3 The following has been considered when developing and reviewing the plan:
 - Admissions
 - Attainment
 - Attendance
 - Exclusions
 - Education
 - Extra-curricular activities
 - Governing body representation
 - Health and Safety
 - Physical school environment
 - Selection and recruitment of staff
 - Sporting education and activities
 - Staff training
 - Welfare
- 2.4 The School has also consulted staff with responsibility for the induction arrangements for new pupils to ensure that the particular needs of pupils with protected characteristics are recognised in advance, that suitable staff training is provided and that any modifications to the curriculum or premises are fed into the plan before the arrival of the new pupils.
- 2.5 Appropriate training for relevant staff will be provided to enhance an understanding of those with protected characteristics, to highlight the need for making reasonable adjustments and to improve the School's educational provision.

3 How the plan is reviewed and monitored

- 3.1 The Bursar and Operations and Estates Manager are responsible for the triennial review of this plan, along with the monitoring of the short and medium-term targets for improvement contained within this plan. The review leads to new recommendations, including input from the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Compliance Manager and the document is then placed on the agenda for the meeting of the Buildings Committee in the Lent Term of the review year. Costings are allocated to the various aspects of the plan, together with clear timeframes for completion of the various elements.
- 3.2 There is a formal review of the implementation of the plan during a Lent Term SMT meeting. The Bursar and Operations and Estates Manager provide a full report at this meeting and identify which measures have been achieved and where any delay in implementation is foreseen as well as addressing any specific gaps identified. All actions identified will be carried out in a reasonable time frame and after considering pupils' disabilities and the preference of their parents. The plan is then updated with adjusted timeframes where necessary
- 3.3 When conducting the annual review, the School will consider all kinds of disabilities and impairments including, but not limited to, ambulatory, dexterity, visual, auditory and comprehension disabilities including hidden disabilities such as autism and dyslexia.
- 3.4 This plan is also reviewed where the School, or any part of it, has undergone a refurbishment.
- 3.5 The school's Governors are ultimately responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Accessibility Plan during the period to which it relates. A new plan will be drawn up every three years.
- 3.6 The plan should be read in conjunction with the School's Admissions Policy, Inclusion, Equality & Diversity Policy, Curriculum Policy and the Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties Policy.

4 The School buildings and grounds

- 4.1 The School consists of multiple buildings of different ages situated on a 40 acre site based around a Grade 1 listed mansion.
- 4.2 The Nursery and Pre-Prep are situated in two adjoining buildings which are modern, light, and airy with full accessibility from the front doors and around the buildings. Disabled facilities are provided in both buildings. There is a fenced-in nursery playground and an open green field playing area for Reception to Year Two. Both these playing areas can be accessed by wheelchair
- 4.3 The Lower School (Years 3-4) is a modern, light, and airy building with disabled access and facilities.
- 4.4 The Performing Arts Centre, which is linked to the lower school, has full disabled access and a lift to the stage floor, and includes the year 3 and 4 changing facilities. A disabled toilet is available with access from both the Lower School and the theatre. A dedicated wheelchair space is available within the theatre.
- 4.5 The main house is a Grade 1 listed building with five floors (basement, ground floor, mezzanine, 1st floor, and 2nd floor). The design of the building and planning restrictions means that it is not possible to put in a lift to the upper and lower floors. Access to the ground floor can be made from the main entrance where there is a ramp or via a side entrance with ramp. There is reasonable access (not wheelchair)

to the 1st floor and limited access to the mezzanine and 2nd floor. There is reasonable access to the basement. Currently Years 5-8 are based in this building and scheduling of classes / location of form rooms can be adapted to allow access. Currently there is no wheelchair access internally to the music block, although this can be accessed externally.

- 4.6 Boys boarding is based on the mezzanine and first floor of the main house which can only be accessed by a flight of steps.
- 4.7 Access can be gained to the Sports Hall, which is used for services and whole school events as well as sporting activities, via a sloped entrance at the main door. From here there is full access to the ground floor including sports hall, changing rooms and dance studio but limited access to the first floor up a flight of internal stairs. A disabled toilet is provided on the ground floor.
- 4.8 Access to the sports Pavilion is up a sloping stone path from a concrete drive. The Pavilion is on one level and has a disabled toilet.
- 4.9 The swimming pool and changing rooms can be accessed by wheelchair. Entry to the swimming pool (shallow end and deep end) is by steps. No special hoist is provided for disabled access.
- 4.10 River House is a two storey girls' boarding house located off the main campus. Access can be made to the ground floor public rooms but there is only limited access to the dormitories on the 1st floor up a flight of stairs.

5 Access to the curriculum

- 5.1 This plan should be read in conjunction with the School's Admissions Policy, Curriculum Policy and Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties Policy.
- 5.2 Curriculum planning shall reflect a commitment to equality, promoting tolerance and respect for others.
- 5.3 The School aims to offer the highest quality of teaching and learning and support all pupils in the pursuit of academic and personal excellence. We have high expectations of all of our pupils, and we strive to ensure that each and every pupil can take part in the whole school curriculum. We value the diversity of our school community and appreciate the contribution that pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities can bring to school life. This policy applies to all pupils including those in the EYFS and all prospective pupils.
- 5.4 We have an Admissions Policy that seeks to remove barriers to entry to our school for pupils with Protected Characteristics, Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities. We strive to be a fully inclusive and welcoming school that aims to develop excellence in a wide range of fields such as music, drama, art and sport. The school expects its pupils to take part in such activities to the best of their abilities
- 5.5 We regularly review and take steps to improve the physical environment of the school, within the restrictions of the Grade 1 listing of the main house in order to increase the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of the education and associated services offered by the School.
- 5.6 We provide written information to pupils with disabilities in ways that are user-friendly and fully support the pupils in their learning experience.
- 5.7 Our staff regularly review their teaching strategies to ensure that any potential barriers to learning and participation by disabled pupils are removed. We support

our teaching and non-teaching staff with a programme of in-depth training designed to raise their awareness of disabilities and to enable them to minimise any potential difficulties for pupils. We promote the importance of using language that does not offend amongst both our staff and our pupils and ensure that, wherever possible, positive examples of disability are portrayed in teaching materials.

- 5.8 Where we provide an auxiliary aid or service as a reasonable adjustment, we will aim to do so at our own cost. Where a provision does not amount to a reasonable adjustment, we reserve the right to charge the parent at a level that reasonably reflects the cost to the School of providing that service. Details of costs will be provided in writing.
- 5.9 Wherever possible, we will make reasonable adjustments to the timetable to allow children with restricted mobility to attend accessible School facilities. One of the obvious problems the School has, in common with many other schools of its type and age, is its layout and plan.
- 5.10 The children can play in the large areas of playing fields and woodland areas during break times. The area is gently sloping and offers reasonable wheelchair access, but this will be more difficult when the ground is wet.

6 Monitoring and review

Authorised by	Headmaster
Person Responsible for review	Bursar
Effective from	01 April 2024
Review date	February 2027

Appendix 1: Improving access to the physical environment

	Targets	Action and Resource Required	Timescale	Responsibility	Evidence of Implementation
Short Term	Annual fire risk assessment improvements to include recommendations of improvements for the provision of mobility or sensory impaired persons	Review all fire risk assessments and implement training at Inset for mobility or sensory impaired persons	Annually in September	Operations and Estates Manager	Training logs, risk assessments
Short Term	Ensure all necessary staff / pupils have a PEEP in place	Review of staff / pupils requiring PEEP	Annually in September	Operations and Estates Manager	PEEPs in place where required
Short Term	Mobile hearing loop to be installed in the PAC	Purchase and implementation of a new hearing loop	August 2025	Bursar / Operations and Estates Manager	Hearing loop in place
Short Term	Improve accessibility to School vehicles	Explore options for adapting our current School vehicles or purchase a new School vehicle to allow those with mobility difficulties easy access to board our School vehicles	August 2025	Operations and Estates Manager	One or more accessible School vehicles
Medium Term	Ongoing LED light replacement program across the school	Now the basement is complete the rest of the School must follow	Whole school completion by 2025	Operations and Estates Manager	LED lights throughout the school

Medium term	Improve accessibility to second floor in main school through improvement to stone stairs	Review options available with Estate and Historic England	2026	Operations and Estates Manager	Stone stairs have anti slip
Long Term	Improve access to swimming pool and science labs	Create new swimming pool complex and science labs	2027	Bursar / Operations and Estates Manager	Accessible swimming pool and science facilities
Long Term	Improve access to dining facilities through the development of a new dining facility	As part of the Landscape Masterplan, undertake a design and planning working with the Estate, Historic England and local Planners	2027	Bursar / Operations and Estates Manager	Accessible dining facility (new build)

Appendix 2: Improving access to the curriculum and access to information

	Targets	Action and Resource Required	Timescale	Responsibility	Evidence of Implementation
Short term	Greater expertise within the Learning Support Department and increased work with outside agencies to improve understanding and support	Specific training related to the needs of the department Make greater links with external agencies	Ongoing	Head of Learning Support	
Short Term	Complete curriculum audits to ensure they do not inadvertently discriminate against pupils with a disability or SEN	All Heads of Departments to regularly review their curriculum with respect to SEND and adapt where necessary	Ongoing	Deputy Head (Academic)	Adjustments communicated to staff with recommendations implemented where appropriate
Short Term	Complete class audits and pupil voice to ensure access arrangements, as detailed on pupil passports, are in place	Termly class monitoring	Ongoing	Head of Learning Support	Monitoring completed with recommendations and review of pupil passport where appropriate Pupil voice
Short term	Provide access to, and / or guidance for, the use of word and text to Speech/speech to text software for pupils at a significant disadvantage in	Learning Support sessions to develop use of technology	Ongoing	Head of Learning Support	Increased pupil confidence and ability to use software to support learning

	the production of written expression by physical means				
Short term	Whole school approach in the mental wellbeing of pupils and staff	Review of initiatives in place and continual work with pupils and staff to ensure needs are being met	Ongoing	Deputy Head (Pastoral)	
Medium Term	Consideration of further investment in classroom technology and equipment to facilitate improved delivery of information to pupils		Ongoing		
Medium term	A regular programme of training to be implemented to ensure teaching staff have specific training on how to support pupils with a particular disability	A rolling programme of training is produced and implemented, on a three-yearly timescale to include sessions on specific learning needs (e.g., dyslexia), specific medical conditions (e.g., epilepsy) and specific disabilities (e.g., blind or partially sighted students) Resources may include paying for outside experts to run training sessions	Ongoing	Head of Learning Support	Training Programme produced and published. Training programme implemented