

Accessibility Strategy 2026-2029

**Hampshire County Council's strategy for the
inclusion of Children and Young People with
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
(SEND) in education settings**

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Foreword

We are pleased to introduce this Accessibility Strategy, which sets out our shared commitment to ensuring that children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and their families, can access the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Across our local area, partners in education, health and social care, are united by a common ambition: that children and young people are heard, are safe and happy, and have the same opportunities and choices as their peers, to enable them to reach their full potential. This strategy reflects that ambition and builds on our collective responsibility to remove barriers, reduce inequalities, and create a more inclusive system for all.

This strategy has been informed by the voices of children and young people, parents/carers, and education settings. We will measure our progress carefully, using data, feedback, and lived experience, to ensure we know what we do makes a real difference. Most importantly, we will continue to listen to our children and young people, our parents and carers, and professionals across the system, so that their voices continue to shape the way forward.

Natalie Smith
Assistant Director Education & Inclusion

Executive Summary

Hampshire's Accessibility Strategy (2026-2029) sets out our vision and commitment to ensuring that every child and young person, regardless of their SEND needs, receives high quality support and opportunities to thrive within an inclusive community and is aligned to [Hampshire's Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#) and [Local Area Partnership Action Plan and Self Evaluation](#).

Accessibility is fundamental to our ambition to create a truly inclusive system. It is about ensuring children and young people, and their families can:

- access high-quality education in their local community wherever possible
- engage with, and choose education settings that are welcoming, inclusive, and accessible from the outset, including during visits and admissions processes
- participate fully in school life and their wider community
- receive information in ways that meet their individual needs
- learn in environments that actively support their physical, sensory, and communication requirements

In line with **Schedule 10** of the **Equality Act 2010**, local authorities must prepare accessibility strategies for the schools for which they are the responsible body. These strategies must address three key areas over a prescribed period:

1. increasing disabled pupils' participation in school curriculums
2. improving the physical environment to enable disabled pupils to take advantage of education, benefits, facilities, or services and
3. improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils in accessible formats, within a reasonable time and in ways determined after considering pupils' disabilities and preferences

Local authorities must keep strategies under review, revise them if necessary, and implement them.

We recognise that improving accessibility is not a standalone activity. It is fundamental to improving attendance, reducing exclusions, supporting inclusion, and ensuring that children and young people are prepared well for adulthood.

Our approach is rooted in partnership. Education settings, the Local Authority, health and social care services, and children, young people and families all have a role to play in improving accessibility. This strategy sets out our shared priorities and how we will work together to deliver them.

This strategy is strengthened by innovative approaches to participation, including the **Accessibility Ambassadors Programme**, which empowers young people to actively assess and improve accessibility within their communities; including in education settings.

Hampshire Local Area Partnership Vision

In Hampshire, we believe that SEND is everyone's business, which means that everyone has a key role to play to ensure that all children and young people, and their families, receive the support they need. Our vision of what we would like SEND services to look like in Hampshire is:

"Children and young people with SEND in Hampshire are heard, safe and happy, able to learn in inclusive environments, access joined-up services, and progress to independent adult lives"



Our vision is to create a cohesive and effective system that supports all children and young people, ensuring they are valued, visible, and included in their communities.

Local Context

Since 2016, Hampshire's total school population has **increased by 4.7%** meaning there are now **proportionally more pupils** with an **EHCP** or **SEN Support*****

Over 21,000 Education, Health & Care Plans (**EHCPs**) **0-25** population*

7.4% of **0-16** population have an **EHCP +1%** compared to last year***

15.3% increase in EHCPs compared to 2024/25 (**12.5%** increase **nationally**)**

14.6% of **0-16** population on **SEN Support +0.4%** compared to last year***

Most Prevalent Primary Needs
ASD **24.3%** / **31.5%** nationally**
SEMH **29.6%** / **21.4%** nationally**
SLCN **21%** / **22.3%** nationally**

Pupils with an **EHCP** account for an **increasing proportion** of pupils with SEND; **33.6%** of pupils in 2026, up from **19.6%** in **2016*****

43.8% CYP with an EHCP educated in **mainstream schools** compared to **41.5%** **nationally****

In Hampshire, we recognise that:

- there is increasing demand for SEND Support and specialist provision
- education settings are supporting more complex and diverse needs
- some children and young people experience significant barriers to attendance and engagement with education
- there is a reliance on specialist out of area provision for some cohorts

These challenges reinforce the need to strengthen accessibility across all settings, ensuring that provision is inclusive, sustainable, and able to meet a wide range of needs locally, in line with the SEND Reforms which set out an expectation that the majority of children and young people's needs will be met within mainstream education settings.

**internal data sources*

***SEN2 publication (2025 data; published June 2026)*

****School census data published June 2026*

How we developed this strategy

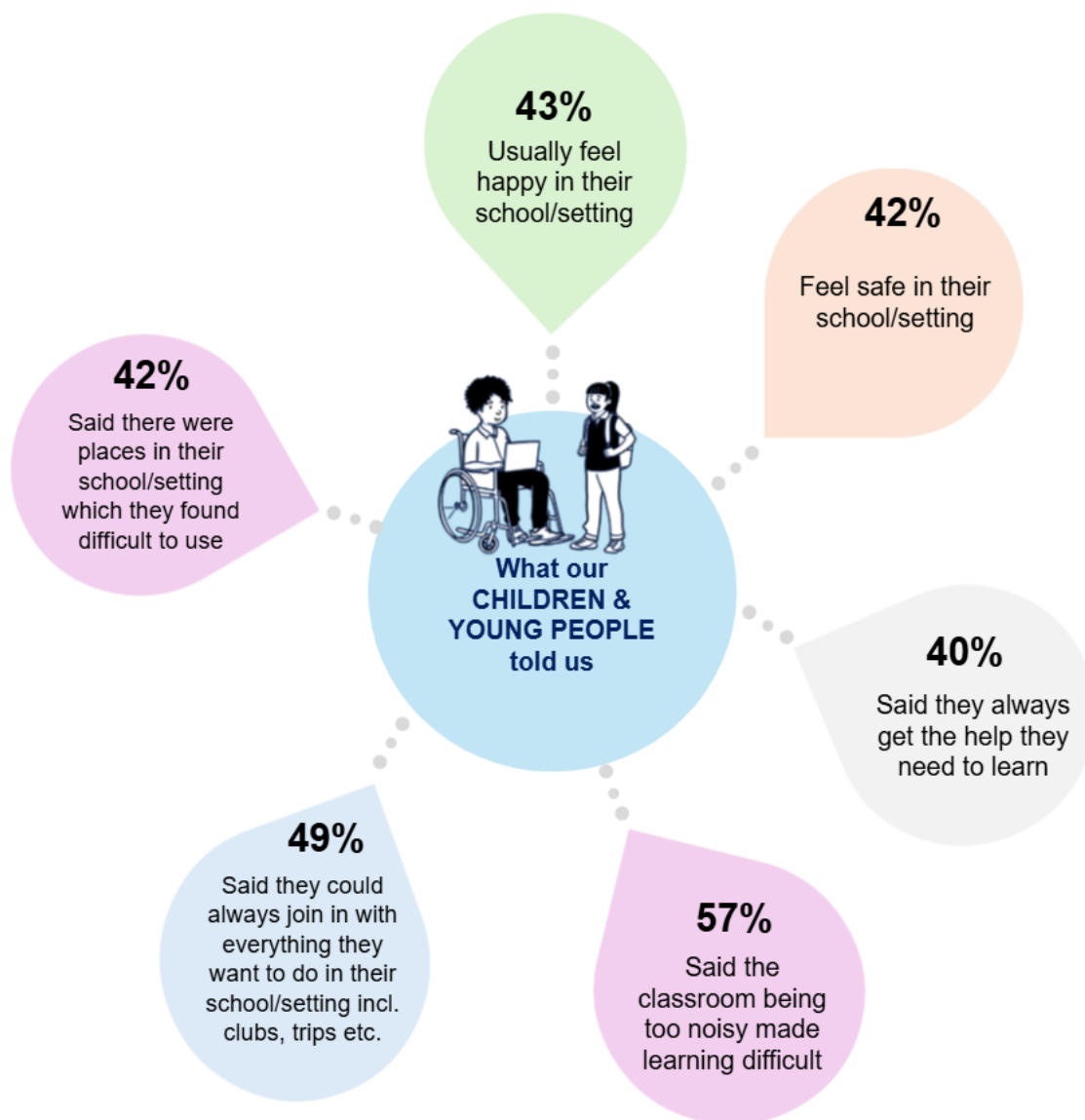
We engaged with our **80 education settings** who are signed up to the **Hampshire Approach to Inclusion Framework**, inviting them to contribute through a structured survey. These settings also shared a learner facing survey to capture the views and experiences of children and young people.

Parent/Carer views which have been reflected in this strategy have been gathered through the annual parent/carers survey by Hampshire Parent/Carer Network (HPCN), specifically where responses relate to accessibility in education settings. While this survey was not originally designed to inform this strategy, the relevant insights have been used to strengthen our understanding of parent/carers experiences.

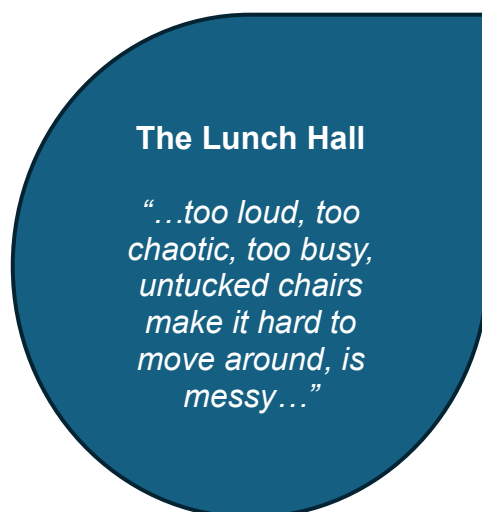
In addition, as part of our ongoing work to develop and improve the Local Offer, a dedicated survey focussing on accessibility in education settings will be launched and will further inform and shape our work and priorities going forward.

This engagement generated a rich set of qualitative and quantitative feedback, which is summarised below.

In addition to surveys, Hampshire has developed the Accessibility Ambassadors Programme, a youth-led initiative involving young people from Hampshire SEND Youth Forum, #BeeWell Youth Matters Steering Group, and Youthwatch. Through this programme, young people directly assess the accessibility of community venues and services, providing structured feedback and recommendations for improvement. Learning from this work, including barriers accessing spaces, will continue to shape delivery of this Accessibility Strategy.



When children and young people were asked which areas of the school/setting they find difficult to use, the most common response was:



When children and young people were asked what would make their school/setting better, the most common responses were:



Quieter/less
noisy
environments

Friendship/belonging
*"...choosing who to
work with, kindness,
no bullying..."*

Smaller/calmer
spaces for time
out

More
support/help
with learning



When asked about challenges within the school or setting's physical environment, the most frequently mentioned issues were:





Small or
restrictive
classroom
spaces



Old or
unsuitable
buildings

When asked what training or support would improve accessibility, the most common responses were:



Improving
inclusive
teaching and
curriculum
adaptation



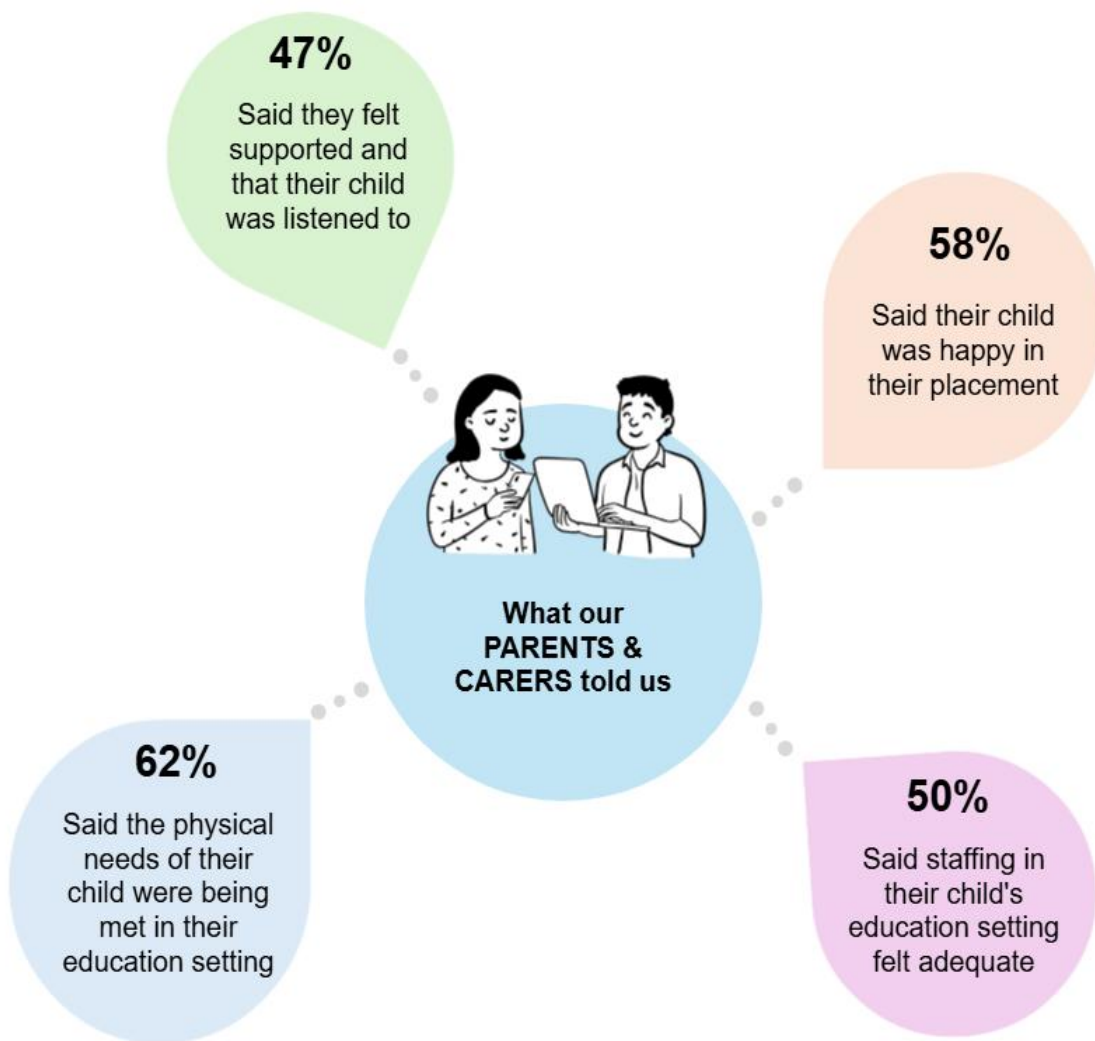
Ongoing staff
training and
awareness
development



Training from
specialists e.g.
hearing, vision
etc.



Understanding
legal
responsibilities



Who this strategy is for?

Audience

The Hampshire Accessibility Strategy sets out the Local Authority's plan to increase access to education for pupils with disabilities in the education settings for which it is responsible for. It provides guidance and is a reference point from which to inform a setting's Accessibility Plan.

All schools and settings should have an Accessibility Plan and there is an expectation that the Accessibility Plans are responsive to the priorities which are set out in this strategy.

Academies & Free Schools

This strategy also applies to academies, free schools, and other education providers that are not maintained by Hampshire County Council. All education settings, regardless of their governance, have a legal requirement under **Schedule 10, Paragraph 3** of the **Equality Act 2010** to develop and publish an Accessibility Plan.

The Hampshire Accessibility Strategy should be read in conjunction with current national guidance. It will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with any updates to national legislation or best practice.

Although academies and free schools operate independently from the Local Authority, many of the services and support arrangements provided by Hampshire County Council may also benefit disabled children and young people attending these settings.

Early Years & Post-16 Provision

Not all Early Years and post-16 providers are required to publish an Accessibility Plan however, as a matter of good practice, it is strongly encouraged. These providers remain under a duty to make **reasonable adjustments** to ensure that children and young people with disabilities are able to access provision and participate fully.

Legal Context

This Accessibility Strategy is shaped by national legislation and reflects Hampshire County Council's commitment to ensuring that children and young people with SEND can fully participate in education and achieve their potential.

Equality Act 2010

The [Equality Act 2010](#) provides the main legal framework for this strategy. It introduced the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) which, in this context, applies to Local Authorities. Schools, and other education providers.

Under this duty, organisations must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- improve equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics
- promote positive relationships between different groups

Disability is one of the protected characteristics covered by the Act. Importantly, the legislation recognises that achieving equality for disabled people may require **different or additional support**, rather than treating everyone the same.

Definition of Disability & SEND

A person is considered disabled if they have a **physical or mental impairment** that has a **substantial long-term impact** on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes a wide range of needs such as: physical disabilities, sensory impairments, long-term health conditions, and neurodivergence.

A child or young person has **SEND** if they require additional or different support to access learning, in line with the [SEND Code of Practice \(2014\)](#).

Duties for Hampshire & Education Providers

In Hampshire, the Local Authority and education providers have a legal duty to:

- ensure disabled children and young people are not treated unfairly
- protect them from discrimination and harassment
- promote inclusion and participation
- make **reasonable adjustments** so that disabled pupils are not placed at a disadvantage
- provide **auxiliary aids and services**, where reasonable, to support access to education

These responsibilities apply not only to pupils on roll, but also to **children, young people, and families who may be considering a school/setting**. Schools and providers must ensure that key parts of the admissions process e.g. open days, visits, information sharing, are accessible so that families can make informed choices.

These duties are **anticipatory**, meaning that schools/settings and services should plan ahead for a wide range of needs, including how environments, the curriculum and information will be made accessible.

Accessibility Strategies & Plans

Every Local Authority, including Hampshire County Council, has a **statutory duty to prepare and publish an Accessibility Strategy**. Schools/settings are also required to publish their own **Accessibility Plans**.

The purpose of these is to explain how over time they will:

- improve access to the curriculum for disabled children and young people
- improve the physical environment to increase access to education, facilities and services
- make written, and other information, more accessible by providing it in different formats and ways

Together, these duties ensure a planned and consistent approach to improving accessibility across all schools/settings.

School/setting Accessibility Plans should be available on school websites and are typically included within, or linked to, the **SEN Information Report**. They **may also be requested as part of inspection processes**.

Reasonable Adjustments & Support

Reasonable adjustments are changes made to remove barriers that might prevent a child or young person from fully participating in education. These may include:

- adapting teaching methods, resources, or the curriculum
- adjusting routines, behaviour approaches, or the school day
- making changes to the physical environment where possible
- providing additional adult support or alternative ways of working

These adjustments help to ensure that children and young people with SEND can access the same opportunities as their peers.

Auxiliary Aids & Services

Auxiliary aids and services are tools, equipment, or support, that help a child or young person access learning and school life more easily. Schools/settings have a duty to provide these where it is reasonable to do so, and where it would prevent a pupil from being at a disadvantage.

Examples include:

- specialist equipment such as adapted keyboards or writing grips
- coloured overlays or modified learning materials
- assistive technology such as laptops, tablets or software
- adapted physical education equipment

These supports are an important part of ensuring accessibility and inclusion.

Supporting Requirements & Guidance

Schools/settings must publish key information about how they support children and young people with SEND including:

- an annually updated SEN Information Report
- arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions, in line with statutory guidance ([*Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions; 2015*](#) – consulted on between May & March 2026, with implementation of revised statutory guidance expected September 2026)
- clear and inclusive admissions arrangements

Our priorities

The following priorities set out how Hampshire County Council and education settings will work together to improve accessibility for children and young people with SEND. They are informed by statutory responsibilities, stakeholder feedback, and demonstrate a shared commitment to reducing barriers to learning, participation, and inclusion.

These priorities also reflect the importance of partnership working across education, health and care services, recognising that improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND requires a coordinated joined-up approach.

Taken together, the priorities focus on improving access to the curriculum, the physical environment, information, and admissions processes. The aim is to ensure that all children and young people, both those already in education, and those preparing to join, can access high-quality provision, feel included in the school/setting community, and achieve their full potential.

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Priority 1: Increase Access to the Curriculum	- maintain and develop the Local Offer, ensuring clear information about available services and support - provide training and professional development for school/setting staff including: - inclusive teaching approaches and curriculum adaptation - understanding legal responsibilities - specialist training e.g. vision, hearing, physical needs - facilitate networks and opportunities to share good practice and develop expertise e.g. SENCO networks - Offer specialist advisory and outreach services to support schools/settings in meeting a wide range of needs - promote a graduated approach to identifying and removing barriers to learning - ensure EHCPs are clear, specific, and effective in supporting access to learning for those pupils who require that level of support - support effective transitions between settings and phases of education work jointly with partners e.g. health, to fund and provide specialist equipment where appropriate - promote high aspirations and positive outcomes for all children and young people with SEND	- provide a broad & balanced curriculum, including access to wider opportunities e.g. trips, enrichment, extracurricular activities - deliver high-quality teaching with appropriate adaptation and personalised approaches - make reasonable adjustments including the use of auxiliary aids, and specialist equipment, to remove barriers to learning - set high expectations and monitor the progress of pupils with SEND effectively - publish clear information about how the curriculum is adapted e.g. in the SEN Information Report / Inclusion Strategy & Accessibility Plan - ensure staff have access to ongoing training and development, including specialist knowledge where needed - engage children, young people, and families in decision-making about support - ensure effective transition arrangements at all stages

	• make clear the principles of ordinarily available provision and what this looks like in education settings	
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	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Priority 2: Increase Access to the Physical Environment	• ensure new builds, extensions, and refurbishments meet accessibility standards and anticipate future needs • ensure accessibility improvements in maintained schools/settings are considered, and delivered, through the capital programme • consider joint funding for more complex capital projects for accessibility • work with schools/settings to plan, and fund, reasonable adjustments (where appropriate to do so), with clear processes for smaller and larger works • support a joined-up approach across services to meet individual needs • promote accessibility audits to help schools/settings identify and prioritise improvements • support and expand initiatives such as the Accessibility Ambassadors Programme, enabling young people to carry out accessibility audits of education and community environments and provide feedback to inform improvement planning	• regularly review and improve the accessibility of their buildings and outdoor spaces ensuring compliance with building regulations and health & safety standards • publish planned improvements in their Accessibility Plan • consider accessibility for both current and future pupils, including those expected to join the school/setting • implement reasonable adjustments to the physical environment where required • seek and act on professional advice e.g. occupational therapy, sensory specialists including applying advice from completed accessibility audits • ensure facilities support a wide range of needs for example: • ramps, handrails, accessible toilets • appropriate acoustics, lighting and signage • safe, calm, or low stimulation spaces • ensure accessibility for school activities including trips & extracurricular activities including by completing risk assessments • engage with feedback from children and young people, including through initiatives such as Accessibility Ambassadors, to inform accessible improvements to buildings, spaces, and facilities

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Priority 3: Increase Access to Information	• continue to develop and improve the Local Offer, based on feedback from families and children and young people • provide accessible information and guidance in a range of formats • support schools/settings through specialist advice services to improve access to information	• ensure information is available in clear, accessible formats, and within a reasonable timeframe • publish accessibility improvements in their Accessibility Plan and SEN Information Report • use a range of communication methods and technologies to meet different needs • review staff skills and ensure they can support accessible communication

	• work with partners to ensure access to assistive and communication technologies • provide training and guidance (including for governors) on accessibility requirements • promote transparency by sharing accessible information and feedback, including outputs from programmes such as Accessibility Ambassadors, to support informed decision-making	• involve children, young people, and families in decisions about how information is provided • ensure websites are clear, up-to-date, and accessible, and include links to the Local Offer • draw on pupil voice, including from structured programmes such as the Accessibility Ambassadors
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	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Priority 4: Ensure Fair & Accessible Admissions	• ensure admissions processes comply with the School Admissions Code, Equality Act and SEND legislation • maintain clear processes for children and young people with, and without, EHCPs • provide accessible, easy to understand information, to support families through the admissions process • work with schools/settings to ensure placements consider both parental preference and accessibility needs • work with schools/settings and partners to ensure families are able to make informed choices about suitable placements	• clearly communicate admissions arrangements and accessibility information • ensure open days, visits, and transition activities are accessible to all children, young people, and families by making reasonable adjustments such as: • providing interpreters e.g. BSL or language interpreters • offering quiet or low stimulation visits or tours • adapting timings or formats of open events • ensuring physical access to all areas used during visits • engage proactively with families, offering support where needed e.g. with completing forms, understanding provisions etc. and to respond to individual access needs • plan ahead to meet the needs of prospective pupils, not just those already on roll

Enabling the delivery of our priorities

Delivering these priorities requires a clear, coordinated approach between Hampshire County Council, schools/settings, and partners across education, health, and care. This includes making effective use of available funding, building staff expertise, and ensuring robust monitoring so that improvements lead to meaningful outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Funding & Use of Resources A range of funding streams support accessibility, and it is important that these are used effectively and in line with identified needs	- provide guidance on available funding routes, including high needs funding (element 3/top-up funding) where additional support is required for individual learners - work collaboratively with schools/settings, and health partners, to support joint funding for specialist provision, equipment and technology support access to capital funding and investment programmes for significant adaptations to school buildings - ensure that funding decisions are aligned with identified needs, including those set out in EHCPs	- use their delegated budgets (including elements 1 & 2 funding) effectively to support inclusive practice, reasonable adjustments, and small adaptations plan and prioritise spending to ensure accessibility improvements are sustained and targeted - consider value for money while ensuring pupil's needs are met appropriately

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Building Capacity & Expertise Improving accessibility is dependent on staff knowledge, confidence, and the effective use of specialist advice	- provide training, guidance and professional development to support schools/settings in delivering inclusive practice facilitate access to specialist services e.g. sensory support, outreach, therapy and advisory services support schools/settings to develop a needs-led graduated approach to provision	- ensure staff access ongoing training and development including specialist expertise where required - make effective use of external advice and support services embed inclusive approaches across the school, improving curriculum access, communication and the learning environment

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Partnership Working Partnership working is key to ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach	- work together to ensure a joined-up approach to planning and delivering support align services and resources to support smooth transitions and consistent provision across settings	- work closely with families and partner agencies to ensure support is well coordinated and responsive to need involve children, young people, and families in decision making and planning

	Hampshire County Council Will:	Schools/Settings Will:
Monitoring, Review & Accountability Ongoing monitoring & review are essential to ensuring continuous improvement	• monitor the implementation and impact of this Accessibility Strategy • provide support and challenge to schools/settings where needed • review and update the strategy regularly to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, and local priorities	• regularly review, and update, their Accessibility Plans, ensuring actions remain relevant and effective • monitor the impact of changes and use feedback from pupils, families, and staff to inform improvements • ensure accessibility arrangements are clearly published and communicated

Implementation & Review

The Accessibility Strategy covers a period of 2026-2029 and will be reviewed towards the end of 2028, or sooner if required, to ensure it remains responsive to changes in legislation, national guidance and local priorities.

Delivery of this strategy does not require an additional delivery plan as this work is already embedded in existing programmes and governance structures across Hampshire. These include: the SEND Capital Strategic Board, and the SEND Local Area Partnership Board.

Hampshire County Council will continue to support schools/settings in implementing this strategy by providing guidance, advice, and access to specialist expertise. This includes support through the Local Offer and access to specialist teams e.g. Hampshire Improvement & Advisory Service (HIAS).

Schools/settings are responsible for delivering their own Accessibility Plans, ensuring these are up to date, published, and focussed on improving outcomes for pupils. Plans should reflect both current and anticipated needs and be regularly monitored to ensure actions are effective.

Local collaboration between schools/settings and services will support the delivery of this strategy, enabling the sharing of good practice, identification of local challenges, and development of appropriate solutions. The Hampshire Approach to Inclusion may be used as a vehicle to support this. Outputs from the Accessibility Ambassadors Programme, including reports and feedback regarding accessibility in education settings, will also contribute to ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement.

Related Information

For further details on relevant strategies, legislative frameworks, and support, please refer to the links provided below:

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#)

[SEND Code of Practice \(2014\)](#)

[The Children and Families Act 2014](#)

[Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions; 2015](#)

[School Admissions Code](#)

[Hampshire's Strategic Plan 2025-2028](#)

[Local Area Partnership Action Plan and Self Evaluation](#)

[Hampshire Accessibility Ambassadors](#)

[Hampshire Approach to Inclusion](#)

[SEN Support Line](#)

[Supporting Complex Learners in Mainstream School – e-learning modules](#)

[Hampshire Local Area Partnership](#)

[Hampshire SEND Local Offer](#)

Glossary

Abbreviation	Word(s)	Meaning
-	Accessibility Plan	A document published by a school or setting that explains how it will improve access for children and young people with SEND, including access to learning, buildings, and information
-	Accessibility Strategy	A plan produced by Hampshire County Council setting out how it will support schools/settings to improve access for children and young people with SEND over time
-	Academy	A school funded by the government but run independently from the local authority
-	Admissions Process	The process families go through to apply for a school place
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder	A lifelong neurodevelopmental difference that affects how a person experiences and interacts with the world. Autistic people may communicate, socialise, learn, and process information in different ways. They may also have particular interests, routines, or sensitivities to sounds, lights, textures, or other sensory experiences. Autism is a spectrum, meaning it affects people differently and support needs can vary from person to person
-	Auxiliary Aids	Tools, equipment, or support, that help children and young people access learning and school life, such as assistive technology, specialist equipment, or adapted resources
CYP	Children and Young People	Refers to the children and young people who this strategy is about
-	Capital Programme	Funding and projects used to improve school buildings and environments, including making them more accessible
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan	A legal document that sets out a child or young person's needs and the support they will receive across education, health and care
-	Equality Act 2010	The law that protects people from discrimination and sets out duties for schools/settings and local authorities to support children and young people with SEND
-	Graduated Approach	A step-by-step way of identifying and supporting children and young people's needs, starting with classroom support and increasing as needed

-	Local Offer	A website and service that provides information about support and services available for children and young people with SEND and their families in Hampshire
-	Maintained School	A school funded and overseen by the Local Authority
-	Primary Need	This describes the area where the child/young person may need the most support in their education setting e.g. with communication and interaction
-	Reasonable Adjustments	Changes made by schools/settings or services to reduced barriers for children and young people with SEND e.g. adapting teaching, providing equipment or changing routines
SEMH	Social Emotional and Mental Health	Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs can affect how a child or young person manages their emotions, builds relationships, and behaves in different situations. They may find it difficult to cope with feelings such as anxiety, stress, anger, or low mood, which can affect their learning and wellbeing. With the right understanding and support, children and young people with SEMH needs can develop positive coping strategies and thrive in education and everyday life
SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities	A learning difficulty or disability which requires special educational provision to be made for a child or young person
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator	A member of staff in schools/settings who is responsible for coordinating support for pupils with SEND
-	SEN Information Report	A document published on a school's/setting's website explaining how it will support children and young people with SEND
-	SEND Code of Practice	National guidance that explains how schools/settings, Local Authorities, and other services should support children and young people with SEND
SLCN	Speech, Language & Communication Needs	Speech, Language and Communication Needs refer to difficulties with speaking, understanding language, expressing thoughts and ideas, or communicating with others. Children and young people with SLCN may find it harder to understand what is said to them, use words and sentences effectively, or take part in conversations. With the right support, they can develop their communication skills and access learning more successfully.

-	Specialist Services	Services that provide expert advice and support e.g. hearing, vision, therapy services or outreach teams
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