



BLENHEIM
SCHOOLS

Accessibility Plan

Policy Folder: Operations

Duncombe School

September 2025 to August 2028

Revised September 2026



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1. Introduction

We are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful and equitable environment where all members of our school community are valued and supported. This plan sets out how Duncombe School will identify and reduce barriers for disabled pupils, including prospective pupils and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It also supports wider accessibility for staff, parents and visitors, whose rights are addressed through the relevant school policies.

The proprietor is the responsible body for the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010. The school must not unlawfully discriminate against, harass or victimise pupils or prospective pupils in admissions, the provision of education, access to benefits, facilities or services, exclusion or other treatment.

The protected characteristics relevant to pupils are sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and pregnancy or maternity. Employment duties are addressed separately in the school's equality and employment policies.

This plan addresses the accessibility planning duty under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and supports the school's compliance with the applicable Independent School Standards.

2. Definition

A person is disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment with a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Substantial means more than minor or trivial. Long-term generally means lasting, or likely to last, at least 12 months, or for the rest of the person's life. Recurring or fluctuating effects may also qualify.

Disability can include sensory impairments, neurodevelopmental conditions and long-term physical or mental health conditions where the statutory criteria are met. Cancer, HIV and multiple sclerosis are covered from diagnosis. SEND and disability overlap but are not identical; a disabled pupil does not necessarily have SEN or an education, health and care plan (EHCP). EAL alone is neither SEN nor disability.

3. Purpose

This plan retains the September 2025–August 2028 planning period. It is reviewed annually, and sooner where needs or circumstances change, with a full renewal by September 2028. Progress, resources and outstanding actions are considered at each annual review.



4. Reasonable Adjustments

We identify and anticipate barriers that may place disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled pupils. We make reasonable adjustments to policies and practices, and provide reasonable auxiliary aids and services, to avoid that disadvantage. Support is considered on the basis of need and is not dependent on a pupil having an EHCP.

Auxiliary aids and services may include accessible teaching materials, assistive software, adapted keyboards, hearing support equipment and additional assistance. Where support is not supplied through an EHCP or another service, we still consider our own reasonable-adjustments duty; neither automatic refusal nor automatic provision follows from that absence.

Decisions are made individually, taking account of the likely effectiveness and practicality of the adjustment, available resources and cost, health and safety, other available support and the impact on other pupils. An adjustment is not rejected solely because it has a cost, is absent from this plan or also benefits a pupil outside school. Equipment primarily required for everyday personal use is considered in its individual context, including provision available from health or other services.

The pupil reasonable-adjustments duty relating to policies, practices and auxiliary aids is distinct from the duty to plan improvements to physical accessibility. Physical barriers are addressed through this plan; practical arrangements such as relocating lessons are also considered. The age or layout of a building does not remove the need to assess barriers and possible solutions.

The SENCO and relevant staff work with pupils and parents, and seek specialist advice where appropriate, to agree, record and review adjustments. Where a proposed adjustment is not considered reasonable, the reasons and alternative ways of supporting access are recorded and discussed with the family. Pupils and families are not charged for adjustments the school is required to make under the Equality Act.

Trips, residential visits, clubs, PE, performances and other activities are planned with accessibility in mind. Staff consider changes to venues, transport, activities, staffing or equipment before deciding that participation cannot be enabled. Decisions are based on individual assessment and consultation rather than assumptions about a disability.

Our Relational and Inclusive Behaviour Policy is applied with regard to a pupil's developmental stage, disability, SEND, communication profile, sensory needs and agreed support plans. Routines, rewards, consequences and restorative conversations are adjusted where reasonable. Consistency does not require identical responses for every pupil.

Staff receive relevant training and share agreed support strategies appropriately. Adjustments may include visual routines, accessible instructions, seating changes, sensory breaks, a quieter space and assessment arrangements suited to the pupil and the purpose of the assessment.



5. Aspects of the Plan

Increasing disabled pupils' participation in the curriculum and wider school life.

Improving the physical environment so disabled pupils can access education, facilities, benefits and services.

Improving delivery of information to disabled pupils in accessible formats, taking account of their needs and preferences.

6. Responsibility

The Headmaster leads implementation, with the SENCO, phase and subject leaders, the Educational Visits Coordinator and the staff responsible for premises and operations. All staff contribute through inclusive practice and prompt reporting of barriers. The proprietor retains oversight of the plan and its resourcing.

The Headmaster coordinates the annual review, consulting pupils and families and drawing on specialist advice where appropriate. Action leads record progress, evidence, resource requirements and outstanding work in the school's review record. The plan is available on the school website and in accessible formats on request through the school office.

7. Accessibility of the School Site

Duncombe School's Main School building accommodates Years 1–6 in a Palladian-style mansion with later additions. It has a basement, ground floor, first floor and second floor. A converted water tower contains offices, a music practice room and server room. Treetops accommodates younger children through to Reception in a two-storey, octagonal building dating from the 1990s.

The site also includes a single-storey Music and Dance Studio, a wooden PE pavilion with changing rooms, and an astro court with a tensile roof upgraded in 2018.

There are no passenger lifts in the Main School building or Treetops, which creates barriers to upper-floor access. The school will assess individual needs and consider accessible teaching locations and timetabling alongside longer-term options for physical improvements.

Ground-floor entrances to Treetops and the Music and Dance Studio are described as level. Main School entrances have steps or thresholds, and a portable wheelchair ramp is available. The site audit will confirm usable routes, ramp suitability, assistance arrangements, accessible toilets and access to outdoor areas. The school will not assume that permanent step-free access is impossible without assessing feasible options.

Individual emergency evacuation arrangements will be agreed where needed, with appropriate equipment, trained staff, cover arrangements and practice. Fire and other emergency procedures must account for mobility, sensory and communication needs.



8. Actions to Increase Access to the Curriculum

Action leads record progress and evidence at least annually. Resources are agreed through the school's budget process; emerging individual needs are considered promptly.

Action	Timing	Lead	Success evidence
Review schemes of work and pupil support plans for barriers across all subjects, including sensory, communication and physical needs.	Autumn 2026; review termly and Autumn 2027	SENCO and phase / subject leaders	Required adaptations are recorded, used in lessons and reviewed with pupils and staff.
Review trips, residential visits, clubs and performances before booking; agree enabling arrangements with families.	Before each activity; termly review to August 2028	EVC and activity leaders	Planning records show barriers considered, adjustments agreed and participation reviewed.
Audit teaching resources and assistive technology; identify gaps and submit costed priorities to the Headmaster.	Autumn 2026; annually thereafter	SENCO and subject leaders	Priority resources are approved, obtained and evaluated for effectiveness.
Train staff in agreed adjustments, communication and sensory support, and inclusive behaviour responses.	2026–27 induction and training; refresh 2027–28	Headmaster and SENCO	Training records and classroom review show staff can implement agreed support.
Agree appropriate assessment access arrangements, including for Quest Progress where used, in line with provider requirements and assessment purpose.	Before each assessment cycle	SENCO and assessment lead	Arrangements are documented; results are interpreted in light of any adaptations.



9. Actions to Improve the Physical Environment

Action leads record progress and evidence at least annually. Resources are agreed through the school's budget process; emerging individual needs are considered promptly.

Action	Timing	Lead	Success evidence
Audit entrances, thresholds, routes, toilets, stairs, teaching rooms, changing facilities and outdoor spaces. Consult affected pupils and families.	Autumn 2026; review annually	Premises lead and SENCO	A dated audit identifies barriers, priorities, interim measures and estimated costs.
Assess access to upstairs lessons and activities; agree room relocation or timetable changes where needed.	On admission or change in need; termly review	Headmaster and phase leaders	Pupils can access planned learning through agreed, reviewed arrangements.
Prioritise feasible physical improvements through the budget process; record approval, target completion dates and reasons for deferral.	2026–27 and 2027–28 budget reviews	Headmaster, premises lead and proprietor	Each priority has an owner, resource decision and recorded progress.
Review evacuation needs, ramp and evacuation equipment suitability, maintenance, staff training and cover.	Autumn 2026; on change in need and at drills	Premises lead and SENCO	Individual plans are in place where needed; staff practice and equipment checks are recorded.
Review classroom lighting, acoustics, layout, seating and access to quieter spaces when refurbishing or changing rooms.	Ongoing to August 2028	Phase leaders and premises lead	Identified environmental barriers are reduced and pupil feedback informs review.



10. Actions to Improve Access to Information

Action leads record progress and evidence at least annually. Resources are agreed through the school's budget process; emerging individual needs are considered promptly.

Action	Timing	Lead	Success evidence
Identify pupils' communication and information-format needs, with pupils, families and specialists where appropriate.	On entry; termly review to August 2028	SENCO and class teachers	Preferred formats and communication supports are recorded and shared with relevant staff.
Provide adapted print, accessible digital materials, visual instructions and assistive reading tools where needed.	As needed; termly checks	Teachers and SENCO	Pupils receive usable materials in time to participate in the planned learning.
Check digital learning resources for readability, navigation, contrast and compatibility with agreed assistive tools; use captions or transcripts where needed.	Autumn 2026 audit; before new resources	Digital lead and teachers	Barriers are logged and accessible alternatives or adaptations are provided.
Review signage for legibility, contrast and clear symbols, informed by the site audit and users' needs.	2026–27; review 2027–28	Premises lead and SENCO	Agreed signage improvements support navigation; feedback identifies remaining barriers.
Offer accessible versions of school information on request and explain how pupils and families can raise access concerns.	Ongoing; annual review	School office and Headmaster	Requests are recorded and met within agreed timescales, with feedback on usability.



11. Ownership and Review

Plan owner: Headmaster, Duncombe School

Oversight: Proprietor, through the school's current governance arrangements

Implementation: SENCO, phase and subject leaders, Educational Visits Coordinator and premises / operations lead

Application: Duncombe School, England, including EYFS

Plan period: September 2025 to August 2028

Revised: September 2026

Next annual review: September 2027, or sooner if needs or circumstances change

Full renewal: By September 2028

The annual review record will summarise completed actions, evidence of impact, consultation, outstanding work, funding decisions and revised deadlines. The 2027 review should reconcile progress against the original 2025–26 actions with the priorities in this revised plan.

12. Related Policies

SEND, Relational and Inclusive Behaviour; Admissions; Curriculum; Educational Visits; Health and Safety and emergency procedures; Complaints.

13. Legal Basis and Guidance

Equality Act 2010, including Schedule 10 on accessibility planning and the applicable reasonable-adjustments duties.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Department for Education, Equality Act 2010 advice for schools, particularly Chapter 4.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made>





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