

FOREST OAK SCHOOL
and
MERSTONE SCHOOL



Accessibility Policy

(Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)

Adapted by: Georgia Travers and Michael Jacques.

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1. Introduction

This plan incorporates aspects related to accessibility and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Forest Oak School and Merstone School are inclusive education providers that cater for young people with an EHCP outlining a number of learning needs. Predominantly the schools educate young people with Learning Disabilities and ASC needs and delivers education with a tailored timetable to support the needs of the young person

The school recognises that the Equality Act 2010 provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships amongst our young people.

Forest Oak School and Merstone School are committed to fostering an educational environment that is equitable, diverse, and inclusive. Regardless of their abilities every student is supported to feel valued and empowered to thrive. To ensure that our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is embedded in our school culture, Forest Oak School and Merstone School have developed comprehensive policies and practices. We prioritise accessibility by providing necessary accommodations and resources to support the diverse learning styles and needs of our students. Our facilities are designed to be inclusive, and we continuously strive to eliminate barriers to participation in all aspects of school life. By promoting a sense of belonging for everyone, we create an environment where students with special needs can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. We encourage involvement and views of parents and other stakeholders to consistently reflect on our practice and develop equitable, diverse and inclusive practices within school and within our offer for supporting families at home and in the wider community. We believe that by embracing and celebrating the uniqueness of each individual, we not only enhance the educational experience for all our students but also contribute to building a more compassionate and understanding society.

2. Legislation and Guidance

2.1 Schools are required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an accessibility plan. This policy is drawn up in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010, which replaced all existing legislation, including the DDA.

2.2 Disability is defined by the Equality Act 2010 as “A person that has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily 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.

3. Aims

3.1 To reduce and eliminate barriers to the curriculum, in order to aid full participation in education.

3.2 Improve the physical environment of the school to support education, benefits, facilities and services provided.

4. Key principles

4.1 Forest Oak School and Merstone school applies The Equality Act 2020 to their role as employers, complying with the local authority safer recruitment processes.

4.1.1 Ensure all young people feel valued and supported regardless of their disability, ethnicity, culture, origin, gender, gender identity, religion, faith or sexual orientation.

4.1.2 Support pupils to recognise, respect and celebrate diversity, ensuring all pupils are able to fully participate in school life and feel a sense of belonging.

4.1.3 Model positive relationships and attitudes for our pupils to follow.

4.1.4 Our pupils learn in an environment rich in respect, supporting them with communication within the community.

4.1.5 Hold high expectations for all our young people regardless of their starting points and support them to reach their highest potential.

4.2 What are we doing to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

4.2.1 We are aware of reasonable adjustments and how these are designed to enhance access and participation to our students, offering them equity within school and the wider community.

4.2.2 The Head of the Schools and HR LA Partner ensure that all appointment panels give due regard to this policy and the school's policy and procedures when it comes to employment, promotion and training opportunities.

4.2.3 We take seriously the need to consider the equality implications when we develop, adapt or review policies.

4.2.4 We actively promote equality and diversity through teachings within the curriculum and ensuring coverage across departments, key stages and year groups to ensure that key themes are re-emerging topics, to enable for revisiting and consolidation.

4.2.5 Our admissions arrangements are fair and transparent and we do not discriminate against young people by treating them less favourable on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation

4.3 Behaviour, Exclusions and Attendance

4.3.1 Forest Oak School and Merstone School ensure their policies on behaviour, exclusions and absences take full account of the duties of The Equality Act 2010. We closely monitor data on behaviour, exclusions and absence from the schools and take action promptly to address concerns.

4.3.2 Forest Oak School and Merstone School challenge all forms of prejudice and prejudice-based bullying.

5. Action plan

5.1 To reduce and eliminate barriers to the curriculum, in order to aid full participation in education.

Target	Current Good Practice	Actions
To establish and define pathways for learners, broadly based on academic ability.	From September 2023, both Forest Oak and Merstone School have regrouped classes to streamline the curriculum outcomes to cultivate academic ability.	Embed curriculum Review curriculum and assessment outcomes and revise curriculum as needed due to being newly established.
To enhance resources on offer that provide augmentative and alternative means of communication while promoting communication of all.	Individual communication aids Speech and Language specialists and local offer Communication in print Switch use Recent change of phonics schemes.	Review curriculum updates such as new phonics scheme implementations due to being newly established. Research and invest in any further alternative or augmentative means of communication as needed across departments or for individuals.
To strengthen community links with our wider school community and the neighbouring schools / facilities.	Regular coffee mornings for parents and carers Regular award ceremonies or celebrations / special events such as sports day that parents attend. External events or visitors for joint participation such as immersive theatre. A family support team that assists and support families with a variety of needs.	Strengthen links with local SEN schools through opportunities related to; sports, moderation, planning support. Complete an award that has parents and stakeholders involved to provide feedback and drive improvements.

5.2 Improve the physical environment of the school to support education, benefits, facilities and services provided.

Target	Current Good Practice	Actions
To physically develop the 'Beehive' room that is the base for physio therapy and occupational therapy support.	<p>Physiotherapy and occupational therapy assistant.</p> <p>Local offer for physiotherapy and occupational therapy support.</p> <p>Separate hydrotherapy pool on site to support need.</p>	<p>As it has been established in September 2023, develop the beehive to ensure it meets need of all pupils within school that require its use.</p> <p>Ensure all equipment is serviced and reviewed as needed to ensure compliance and effectiveness in supporting our pupils.</p>
Develop aspects of the playground and outdoor environment.	<p>The Lodge in Merstone site has had new fencing to ensure safety.</p> <p>Hedgerow has been ordered for Merstone site for safety regarding public walkways.</p> <p>Shared tiger turf for sports-based activities and events.</p>	<p>Trampolines in Forest Oak</p> <p>Improvements to the playground equipment and general environment so it is visually appealing and accessible for students to interact with.</p> <p>Forest school development.</p>
Outdoor classroom	<p>Designated area for Forest School.</p> <p>Pizza oven, bug houses and wooden teepee areas for socialising.</p>	<p>Teacher to be trained in delivery forest school sessions and can then disseminate to wider school.</p> <p>Financial investment into new outdoor classroom.</p>

6. Monitoring Arrangements

This document will be reviewed every 3 years, but may be reviewed and updated more frequently if necessary. It will be reviewed by the authors, the headteacher and the governing body.

It will be approved by the governing board.

7. Links with other policies

Although this policy is the key document for information about our approach to equalities in line with the public sector equality duty, we also have the following policies, either joint or individual, to support equity, diversity and inclusion:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Exclusion Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- First Aid and Medication policy
- Complaint's policy
- Safer recruitment Policy.