

St Thomas More VC Academy



Accessibility Plan 2017-2020

Last updated:

February 2018 by R. Hutcherson

Mission Statement

“Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbour as you love yourself.”

(Mark 12:30-31)

St Thomas More VC Academy exists to help parents and carers educate children spiritually, morally, physically and academically as well as possible.

We aim to be a truly Christian community, where our relationships are built on encouragement, concern, respect, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Our religious life is rooted in the faith, practice and moral teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Each person in our community is specially valued and has an important part to play in making sure that we live out our mission.

Background

Under the Equality Act 2010 schools should have an Accessibility Plan. The Equality Act 2010 replaced all existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act. The effect of the law is the same as in the past, meaning that “schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation”. According to the Equality Act 2010 a person has a disability if:

- a) he or she has a physical or mental impairment, and
- b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Accessibility Plan is listed as a statutory document of the Department for Education’s guidance on statutory policies for schools. The Plan must be reviewed every three years and approved by the Governing Body. The review process can be delegated to a committee of the Governing Body, an individual or the Head. The 2017-20 action plan will be appended to this document.

A. Key Values

Our key values are at the heart of all decisions made at St Thomas More. They are:

- The right to learn
 - The right to be safe
 - The right to be respected
1. The Accessibility Plan will be used to advise other school planning documents and policies and will be reported upon annually in respect of progress and outcomes linked to the SDP. The intention is to provide a projected plan for a three year period ahead of the next review date.
 2. The Accessibility Plan is structured to complement and support the school’s equality objectives, and will similarly be published on the school website.
 3. St Thomas More is 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. The Accessibility Plan shows how access is to be improved for disabled pupils, staff and visitors to the school within a given timeframe and anticipating the need to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs where practicable. The Accessibility Plan contains 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; (If a school fails to do this they are in breach of their duties under the Equalities Act 2010); this covers teaching and learning and the wider curriculum of the school such as participation in after-school clubs, leisure and cultural activities or schools 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 and maintain 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 hand-outs, 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. This Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with the following school policies, strategies and documents:
 - Behaviour Management Policy
 - Learning and Teaching Policy
 - Equal Opportunities Policy
 - Health & Safety Policy
 - School Improvement Plan
 - Special Educational Needs Policy
 - Special Educational Needs Report
 - Prospectus
 8. The Accessibility Plan for physical accessibility relates to the access audit of the School, which remains the responsibility of the Governing Body. It may not be feasible to undertake all of the works during the life of this accessibility plan and therefore some items will roll forward into subsequent plans. An accessibility audit will be completed by the school prior to the end of each period covering this plan in order to inform the development of a new Accessibility Plan for the ongoing period.
 9. Equality impact assessments will be undertaken as and when school policies are reviewed. The terms of reference for all governors' committees will include the need to consider Equality and Diversity issues as required by the Equality Act 2010.
 10. The Accessibility Plan will be published on the school website.
 11. The Accessibility Plan will be monitored through the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
 12. The Accessibility Plan may be monitored by Ofsted during inspection processes in relation to Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

B. Aims and Objectives

Our Aims are to:

- increase access to the curriculum for pupils with a disability;
- maintain access to the physical environment;
- improve the delivery of written information to the school community.

Our objectives are detailed in the Action Plan in Appendix 1.

C. Current good practice

We aim to ask about any disability or health condition in early communications with new parents and carers. For parents and carers of children already at the school, we collect information on disability as and when a need occurs.

Physical Environment

Disabled pupils participate in extra-curricular activities. Some aspects of extra-curricular activities present particular challenges, for example: lunch and break times for pupils with social/interaction impairments, after-school clubs for pupils with physical impairments, school trips for pupils with emotional or medical needs; there are very few if any activities that pupils cannot be involved in with appropriate support and provision of staff.

Curriculum

There are no areas of the curriculum to which disabled pupils have limited or no access. Some areas of the curriculum present particular challenges, for example: PE for pupils with a physical impairment, science and technology for pupils with a visual impairment, humanities for pupils with learning difficulties, however by differentiation, individualisation and human resource all can be accessed at a level commensurate with the child's needs.

Other issues affect the participation of disabled pupils, for example: bullying, peer relationships, policies on the administration of medicines, the provision of personal care, the presence or lack of role models or images of disabled people, in effect, all the school's policies and procedures, written and unwritten do and will take account of any disabled pupils.

Information

Different forms of communication are made available to enable all disabled pupils to express their views and to hear the views of others. Access to information is planned, with a range of different formats available for disabled pupils to ensure their voice is heard especially during meetings where their needs are discussed, as well as for parents and staff.

D. Access Audit

The school is an old two storey building which has always been used for educational purposes. The ground floor comprises of three classrooms, the school hall, gymnasium, dining area, sacred space, resources/training room and the main reception/school office. Four classrooms and two cloakrooms are on the top floor, which is accessed by a set of stairs.

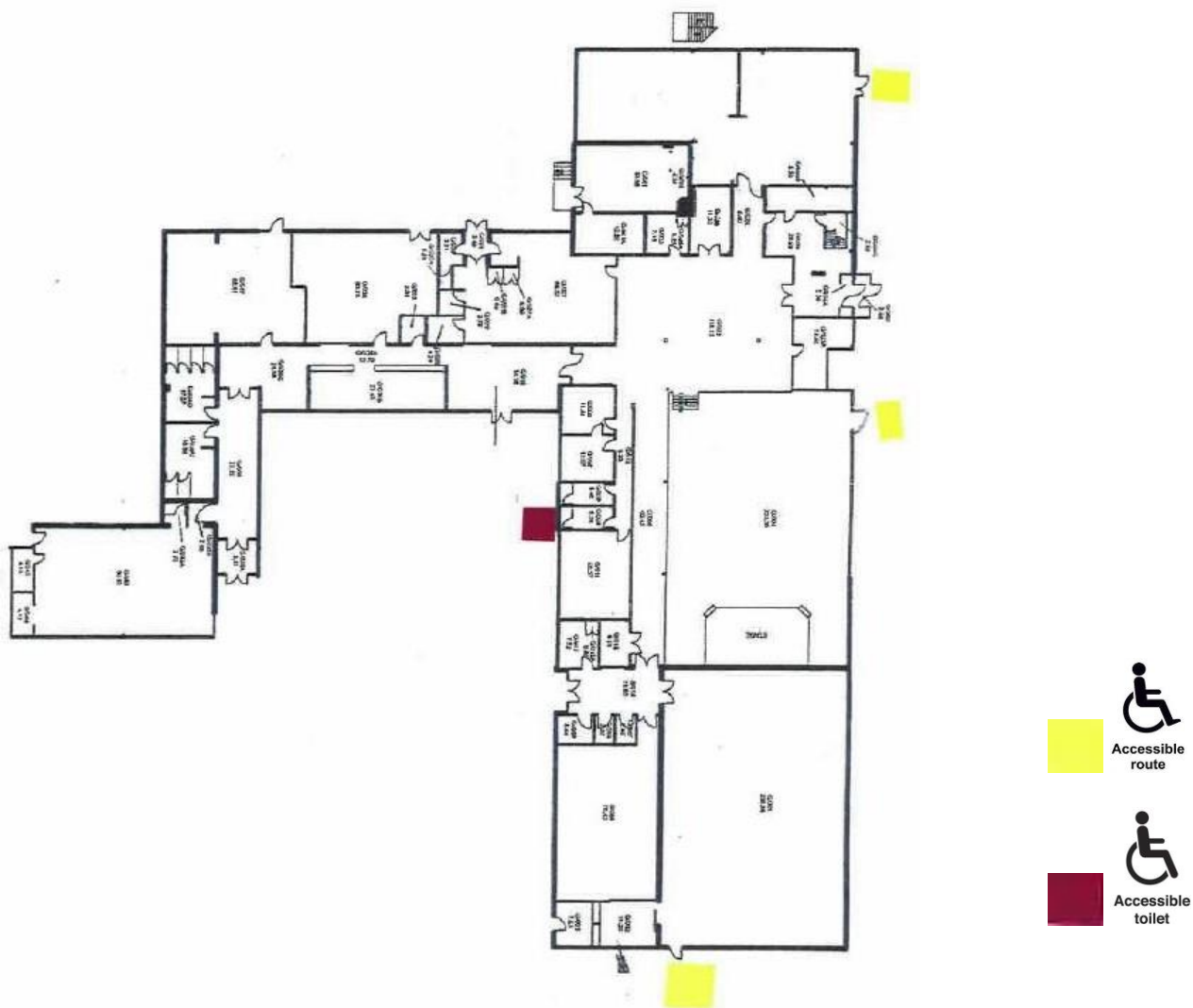
There are several entrances to the school via ramped access; however access to the main school reception is via steps. The steps are marked with yellow highlighting paint. At present we have no wheelchair dependent pupils, parents or members of staff and signage is in place to assist visitors should they need additional support to access the school site.

A disabled toilet is available on the ground floor. It is fitted with a handrail and a pull emergency cord, as well as an adapted wash basin at wheelchair height. The school has internal emergency signage and escape routes are clearly marked. The school car park includes a dedicated disabled parking bay.

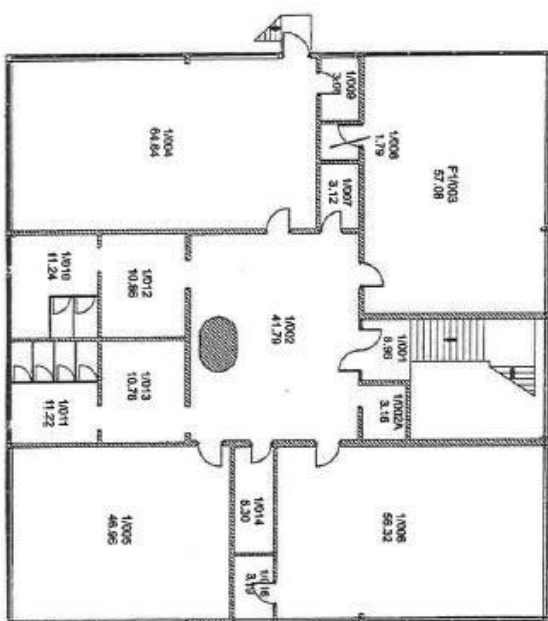
The most recent addition to the school is an internal and external ramp, allowing improved access into the main school hall, which is situated below ground level. We have also improved the front entrance to ensure that the pathway to the school is level and therefore accessibility has been improved.

A plan of the school building showing areas of accessibility and the location of the disabled toilet is shown below.

Ground floor



First floor



All staff working with disabled pupils are provided with the appropriate training from the relevant agency.

Parents can access a range of information about the school from the school website, including performance data, curriculum information, newsletters and a calendar of events. There is also a direct link to the school's twitter page that is regularly updated with school events and information. A text service to parents is used to communicate messages quickly and we have recently developed a school app, which allows parents to access school information from their smart phones.

E. Management, coordination and implementation

We consult with outside agencies and professionals when new situations regarding pupils with disabilities are identified.

It is a requirement that the school's accessibility plan is resourced, implemented and reviewed and revised as necessary. Appendix 1 is an action plan showing how the school will address the priorities identified in the plan.

Appendix 1

Accessibility Action Plan 2017-20

Time Frame	Targets	Strategies	Outcome
Ongoing	Access to the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure planning for individual needs. 	Standards of achievement are high as pupils are able to access the curriculum.
2017-18	Improved access of information to parents and carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve organisation of information on the school website. Develop the use of twitter and social media, including development of a school app for parents. Further develop use of texts. Develop the use of email to distribute newsletters. 	<p>All parents and carers can access information quickly and easily in a variety of ways.</p> <p>Improved delivery of information.</p>
2017-2019	To develop a Parent's group to support families of children with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEN, Pastoral and Community to work together to encourage parents to support each other and the school through meetings, projects, events etc. 	<p>The school will have a supportive group of parents who will share information, provide support and fundraise.</p> <p>Improved information sharing, support and relationships.</p>
As required (and on-going if required)	The school is aware of the access needs of disabled pupils, staff, governors, parent/carers and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create access plans for individual disabled pupils when required. Be aware of staff, governors and parents access needs and meet as appropriate. Consider access needs during recruitment process. 	<p>IEPs in place for disabled pupils and all staff aware of pupils needs.</p> <p>All staff and governors feel confident their needs are met.</p> <p>Parents have full access to all school activities.</p> <p>Access issues do not influence recruitment and retention.</p>
As required	Layout of school to allow access for all pupils to all areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider moving an upstairs classroom downstairs if a disability arises in Y3, Y4, Y5 or Y6. Ensure corridors are kept clear at all times. Ensure signage and exit routes are clearly marked. 	Access for all.
Ongoing	Ensure access to reception area for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create signage which clearly assists wheel chair users to gain access to the school. 	Disabled parents/carers/visitors feel welcome.