North Herts Education Support Centre

Accessibility Policy

Policy reviewed by:	**R Pieterse (HfL Accessibility Policy adopted)**
Executive Head: **Chair of Governing Board:**	**D Nearney** **D Hughes**
Date Reviewed:	**Autumn 2025**
Ratified by:	**Management Committee**
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Frequency of review:	**Annual**
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This policy follows the model guidance from the latest Herts for Learning Education "Accessibility" Policy for Schools.	

Document Control/ Review Sheet

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
001	NEW Federation Policy	13/10/2024
002	Reviewed	17/09/2025

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Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Centre Development Plan** and outlines the proposals of the Management Committee of the Stevenage & North Herts Education Support Centres, to increase access to education for students with disabilities in the three areas required by the planning duties in the Equality Act 2010.

A person is regarded as having a disability under the Act where the person has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to- day activities.

This plan aims to:

- Increase the extent to which students with disabilities can participate in the school curriculum.
- Improve the physical environment of the school to increase the extent to which students with disabilities can take advantage of education, benefits, facilities and associated services provided.
- Improve the availability of accessible information, which is readily available to other students, to students with disabilities.

The above aims will be delivered within a reasonable timeframe, and in ways which are determined after considering the student's disabilities and the views of the parents/carers and students. In the preparation of an accessibility strategy, the LA must have regard to the need to allocate adequate resources in the implementation of the strategy.

The Management Committee also recognises its responsibilities towards employees with disabilities and will:

- Monitor recruitment procedures to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities.
- Provide appropriate support and provision for employees with disabilities to ensure that they can carry out their work effectively without barriers.
- Undertake reasonable adjustments to enable staff to access the workplace.

The plan will be resourced, implemented, reviewed and revised regularly in consultation with:

- The parents/carers of students
- SLT and other relevant members of staff
- Management Committee
- External partners

This plan is reviewed annually to consider the changing needs of the schools and its students, and where the school has undergone a refurbishment.

Scope

As inclusive Centres, we respect and value the diversity of the community we serve.

We are committed to raising the attainment of all our students with due regard to their individual, social and personal circumstances.

We believe in actively promoting equality of opportunity in every aspect of the life of all students, parents and staff.

We are committed to challenging discrimination against those with disabilities, ensuring equality of access and preparing all students for life in a diverse society.

We recognise that it is the responsibility of every member of our Centre communities to ensure that this ethos is actively and consistently reflected in our practice. We will systematically assess, evaluate and regularly review the impact of our Centre accessibility plans on the life, attitudes and achievements of all groups and individuals amongst our students and staff.

We respect and value the diversity which exists in the wider community, actively taking action in the event of racial incidents. We are committed to challenging attitudes that promote discrimination against those with disabilities, ensuring respect for all and preparing all students for a life in a culturally diverse society.

Our commitment to equality for those with disabilities will be demonstrated through:

- Fostering respect for all groups and individuals, within the context of human rights in respect of race, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Promoting positive non-discriminatory behaviour.
- Ensuring appropriated support for isolated individuals with disabilities within The Centre.
- Encouraging high expectations of all.
- Ensuring representation of a wider range of diversity within our curriculum and Centre community.
- Encouraging links with the wider community.

The Resources Advisory Group are satisfied with the arrangements for disabled access to and inside the building bearing in mind the inherent difficulties of a building of this nature.

Buildings

The Stevenage Education Support Centre
The centre is located in four buildings on the site of the old Collenswood School.

All four buildings have been refurbished to meet the needs of our centre and all the student who attend.

Entry/Exit to the building

- Currently there are no disabled students at the centre
- There is one main entrance to the centre, but the centre is wheelchair friendly throughout
- The Health & Safety committee are satisfied with the arrangement for disabled access to and inside the buildings

Classroom Access
Classrooms are all based on the ground floor and doorways provide adequate access for wheelchairs. There is a ramp to the cabin classrooms.

Car parking
There are two designated disabled car parking spaces situated adjacent to the main entrance.

Toilet facilities
There is a disabled toilet facility in the corridor in the entrance of the main building. There is appropriate furniture and automatic lighting, alarm system and a wide door.

Visually and hearing impaired
With any students who are partially sighted or with slight hearing impairments the staff would place the student at the front of the classroom. Work sheets would be produced with enlarged print. The building, however, has no handrails, no Braille signs and no hearing loops.

Staff Training
Staff would need to have appropriate training when necessary.

Action: Staff training to be booked as appropriate.

The North Herts Education Support Centre
The North Herts Education Support Centre is split over two sites, one in Hitchin and one in Letchworth. Neither site is a purpose built building but has had many alterations to make them more suitable for teaching and education.

The Briar Patch Site, Letchworth

Briar Patch is approximately forty years old and was originally designed as a children's home, with many bedrooms. It does not lend itself to many alterations, though some new extensions have made it possible to improve access for some disabled visitors/students.

Entry/Exit to the building

- Currently there are no disabled students at The Centre.
- There are now three possible entrances/exits into The Centre for wheel chair access. One is via the staff work room and two new entrances at the front of the building with flat, even tarmac surfaces.
- All three door widths meet the national criteria of width.
- There is no lift access to the first floor of the building, where the majority of the classrooms are located.
- The Resources Advisory Group are satisfied with the arrangement for disabled access to and inside the building, bearing in mind the inherent difficulties of a building of thisnature.

Action: Future building plans include a new build at Briar Patch

Classroom Access
The Science/Art room on the ground floor at Briar Patch is accessible to all, being a modern extension. Access to the first floor is limited, via a staircase, or if necessary, the fire escapes. Some first floor rooms have limited access with narrow entry points. The main corridor on the first floor is narrow and can lead to bottlenecks between lessons. Movement here between lessons must be carefully managed.

Car parking
There is a designated disabled parking space next to the Nexus Building at Briar Patch and the first parking bay, opposite the main entrance is kept free for visitors. There is also a suitable parking space to the side of the building which could also be earmarked as a reserved space, this would need signage. The new extension to the buildings has also included three new pathways into the Centre which are suitable for disabled visitors, being made of tarmac, of a suitable width and slope to doors wide enough for wheelchair access. Two are to the front of the building, and one to the rear, into the staff workroom.

Toilet facilities
The new front extension at Briar Patch has included a disabled toilet with appropriate access, on the ground floor. It also has automatic lighting and a wide door.

Visually and hearing impaired
With any students who are partially sighted or with slight hearing impairments the staff would place the student at the front of the class room. Work sheets would need to be produced with enlarged print. The building however as no handrails, no Braille signs and no hearing loops.

All the classrooms have interactive whiteboards with speakers which can help the visually/hearing impaired students when used appropriately

Action: Expert advice is required in order to turn the building into a usable establishment for those students and visitors who are visually and hearing impaired.

Nexus Building

- A single story building
- Entry/Exit to the building through the main classroom/teaching area
- There is one toilet which includes disabled facilities and automatic lighting
- Width of all doors meet the national criteria
- There is an allocated parking space for the disabled
- There are 2 fire escape routes/doors, plus the main garage door
- Currently there no interactive whiteboards

The Bancroft Site, Hitchin

The refurbished site at Bancroft is a converted court house. There is good access to downstairs classrooms, but not to the upstairs for the physically disabled.

Entry/Exit to the building

- Currently there are no disabled students at the Bancroft site.
- The site at Bancroft has a parking space reserved for the disabled. Access is by a new ramp to the front entrance and level access can be gained through the side door and the fire escape door. There are three fire escape doors on the ground floor suitable for evacuation in case of a fire and there is a further fire exit on the first floor. There is no lift provision to the first floor due to the nature of the building.

Classroom Access
Access to all downstairs classrooms at the Bancroft site is good with wide doors. Upstairs classrooms are accessed by a stair case with no provision for an internal lift.

Car Parking
There is limited parking at the Bancroft site, overflow means using the commercial car parks in the town until further notice. There is one space reserved for disabled parking.

Toilet Facilities
The Bancroft site has new toilet facilities with automatic lighting, wide doors and disabled facilities.

Visually and Hearing Impaired
All the classrooms at the Bancroft site have interactive whiteboards and speakers, except for the construction room which has the use of a mobile projector.

Staff Training
Staff would need to have appropriate training when necessary.

Action: Staff training to be booked as appropriate.