

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

DISABILITY POLICY – SENIOR SCHOOL

GENERAL

Admission to the College depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the criteria to maintain, and if possible to improve, the educational and general standards for all its pupils commensurate with the ethos to which the College aspires. The College must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, so that there is every chance that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful school career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at the College.

The College's policy is to apply these criteria for all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware, subject to its obligations to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his or her disability.

The College asks that parents inform the Headmaster of any disability in respect of a prospective pupil at the time of application. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the College may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards appropriate. Subject to this the College will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality.

One of the obvious problems which the College has (in common with many other schools) is its layout which covers a wide area and consists of many separate and some historic and listed buildings of several storeys and without lifts, which have grown up since the school was founded. Another is the system, again common to many schools, of having fixed classrooms for each subject, based on the valid ground of having all the facilities for one subject in one place. This requires pupils to go from classroom to classroom, often up steps or stairs in buildings without lifts. The boarding facilities pose similar problems in a greater degree. It is not hard to conclude that any pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these problems, if not prohibited altogether from access to some or all of the educational and other facilities the school offers. Nor can these matters be remedied in any substantial way by reasonable adjustments short of making major alterations to physical features on the school at prohibitive cost. Even the fruition of long-term plans can only go some way to ameliorate the position.

The school has set up a Disability Policy Review Committee which consists of the Senior Management Team and may co-opt additional members whose expertise in any field would be of assistance. The Committee's terms of reference are:

- (i) to review the school's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect pupils and prospective pupils who are disabled;
- (ii) to make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in its many aspects to pupils or prospective pupils with disabilities by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future and to prepare this Disability Policy;
- (iii) to prepare the school's Disability Policy'
- (iv) to prepare the school's Accessibility Plan'

(v) to review such plans and policies as necessary and at least every 3 years.

The following areas have been considered in detail by the Committee with the results set out below:

Admissions

The Committee has reviewed the College's admissions literature, policy, examinations and procedures.

If a parent wishes to proceed with an application for a place at the College they normally arrange an interview with the Headmaster. During this appointment an opportunity to see the school will be provided.

This occasion provides an opportunity for any disabilities to be talked about. The Headmaster will try on this occasion, or in the days following, to identify how the school will cope with any issues, what testing might be necessary, what special arrangements will be made and what cost implications there may be. If it seems unlikely that the school can meet the pupil's needs this will be stated and the reason given.

All pupils are expected to take entrance examinations and/or supply satisfactory reports. If there are learning difficulties the school will take due account of these.

The aim of the school is to achieve either eight or ten GCSE passes (A* - C), 3 to 4 AS levels and 3 A levels. Pupils for whom the school judges this to be too difficult a task are usually rejected.

This policy states elsewhere that there are difficulties with buildings in providing access to all areas. This apart there are not planned to be any areas of the curriculum which would present immediate problems. In formulating an individual education plan for a pupil with special needs it may be sensible for (a) certain subject(s) not to be studied but this would be stated at the outset, alternative arrangements made and reasons given.

Physical Layout of the School and its Boarding Facilities

The Committee has considered these areas and identified the following problems:

- The campus is not flat. There are steps leading to the majority of buildings, including the principal classroom areas in Main School, Valletort, the canteen and Meade-King Hall.
- Pupils who use wheelchairs will not be able to move around the campus without experiencing barriers to access.
- Pathways of travel often involve steps.

Some adjustments have been made. A ramp has been constructed allowing movement for wheelchair-using pupils between the sports hall (which has disabled toilets) the Main School and Meade-King Hall. Other than this further ramps are not feasible because of limitations of space, as well as budgetary considerations.

Access to all boarding houses is by three or more steps, and there are stairs on each floor as well as between floors. Mobility within the boarding houses is not possible for wheelchair-bound persons. For reasons of security, and because boarders of each house mix freely on the ground floor, ground floor bedrooms are not allowed.

Education

The problems of access to the majority of classrooms have already been explained.

The Committee has considered further the following:

- **Sight impediment**
Lesser degree of sight impediment can be accommodated by placing such pupils in the front of the class or closest to practical demonstrations.

It is more difficult to provide semi- or non-visual guides to facilitate communication around the campus. For example colour coding would be possible if it were necessary but tactile pavings etc. would be too costly and impracticable.

There will be instances where the curriculum can be altered to suit the needs of a disabled pupil, for example by offering an alternative activity which is within the capacity of the pupil. This will require additional resources, such as teacher cover, training equipment etc.

- **Dyslexia and SEN**
The Committee considered the difficulties of pupils with various degrees of learning difficulties, and in so doing consulted the SEN Departmental Head. As a result a paper was produced "Audit of Current Practice for Identifying, Assessing and Providing for Pupils with SEN". This paper forms a part of this Policy.

Emergency and Evacuation Systems

The Committee considered these systems, which are numerous and often differ between buildings. They do not cater for the sight or hearing impaired. To convert them to do so would be expensive and, at present, outside our budget.

Recreational and Sporting Activities

The difficulties already described in this policy are in the main replicated for recreational and sporting activities.

- **Recreational (i.e. Activities, visits, trips, expeditions etc.)**
No specific allowance can be made which may affect the principal or core element of the activity. Every assistance will be given by other pupils for those with minor forms of disability.
- **Sporting**
Every assistance can be given to disabled pupils to ensure that wherever possible they partake in normal sporting activities with their peers. Where this is not possible alternative activities can be provided which are within their means. This is feasible subject to the limitations of time, space and finance.

Welfare

The Committee considered the particular difficulties of welfare for the disabled pupil. It is hoped that, wherever possible, our normal welfare regime will be sufficient for their needs, but it is recognised that this may not always be the case. In such instances consideration will be given to the use of mentors, specially trained members of staff, friendship groups, helplines, complaints procedures etc.

The following areas are identified as particularly important – bullying, non-integration, physical and mental welfare, diet and general health.

Awareness and observance of this Policy

This Policy is to be brought to the attention of staff and pupils as and when it is considered necessary. This will be by means of specific briefings to staff, and general discussions at pupil and tutor group assemblies. Wherever possible the obligations on the disabled pupil to obey rules and regulations, sign-written undertakings and contractual terms will be the same as on other pupils. Every allowance will be given where this is not possible.

D.J.W. Baylis, OBE
Bursar

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