

Accessibility Plan

1) THE CULTURE AND ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

WMSF aims to provide an environment in which people are valued and respected as individuals, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, ability or disability. Through meeting and mixing with a wide range of abilities and needs, students learn to accept and see beyond individual differences and to value what each person has to offer.

Working with young people who have physical or sensory disabilities, or whose behaviour does not always conform to expected norms, is a valuable learning experience for students and teachers alike; they become very aware that physical appearance may mask talents, intelligence and a lively personality of a person with their own contribution to make to WMSF and to society; they also recognise that divergence from behavioural norms may be something to be understood in the context of learning disabilities and individual differences.

Our view is that members of the Sixth Form, staff and students, able bodied, disabled or with learning difficulties, are all enriched by the experience of working together.

2) PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The WMSF is fully accessible to wheelchairs, including lift access to all floors, apart from rooms on the mezzanine levels. 6 of these are offices used by members of senior and middle management, one is a staff workroom and 3 are classrooms; no lesson is timetabled in any of these classrooms if there is a physically disabled student on that course. Staff who have offices on these levels are all contactable by telephone. Lifts have also been installed in the two blocks apart from the main building, so all rooms in these teaching blocks can be accessed by all students.

There is a rest room with a bed and 3 disabled toilets.

Learning support assistants/support teachers are employed to assist physically disabled students with personal matters, carrying books, writing etc, if required.

Accessibility audits have been carried out on behalf of visually impaired students and modifications made to the building to comply with health and safety requirements.

There are refuge points signed throughout the site for emergency evacuation. Students with mobility problems and in wheelchairs are inducted in the procedures for emergency evacuation.

3) PROVISION OF AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES

External services are used to support teachers working with students who have a physical disability or sensory impairment.

Occupational therapists, the MRO for Visual Impairment and teachers from the Sensory and Language Impairment Team (SLIT) advise on resources and help us to access them. Resources used by hearing impaired students include radio aids and soundfield system.

Resources used by visually impaired students include large screen computer monitors and appropriate software, video telescope, CCTV and enlarged texts.

The Speech and Language Therapy service (NHS) provides assessments and support for students with a speech and language impairment.

MENCAP provides travel training for students who have difficulty travelling independently for physical or emotional reasons.

The West London Mental Health Trust provides support, in various forms, for young people with mental health problems, their families and concerned professionals (such as ourselves). Apart from the Community Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), a new (and potentially very valuable) provision is the First Incident of Psychosis Recovery and Support Team (FIRST), which provides a specialist service for people between the ages of 18-35 who have experienced symptoms of psychosis for the first time.

At present, the provision of aids and services is adequate for the projected needs of students. We have previously employed BSL interpreters and communicators to access the curriculum for profoundly deaf students and would do so again when necessary.

4) TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

SEND Provision maps are drawn up in accordance with SEN policy and the Code of Practice (2015), which detail arrangements for individual students according to need, e.g. seating position, colour of whiteboard marker, enlargement of texts and style of delivery.

Medical Needs Plans are drawn up for students with medical difficulties in accordance with The SEND Code of Practice (2015) for young people with a long term or recurring medical condition, which detail the condition, the medical professionals involved, information about the condition, special arrangements etc for the young person. See the WMSF Medical Needs Policy.

Information on specific disabilities is disseminated to teaching staff to ensure and reinforce understanding of particular conditions and their effects. This is done each term and by their Lead Sen Person throughout the school year. Extra time is provided where appropriate for completion of work, see Policy for Extra time in BTECs. Teaching staff are reminded of less obvious effects of disabilities, in particular that students with physical disabilities, sensory impairments and learning difficulties such as dyspraxia and dyslexia are likely to become very tired due to the additional effort they have to expend to access and process information and produce work.

It is sometimes useful, with the student's agreement, for the disability to be discussed with the class (in a whole class setting or with groups or selected individuals), so that they understand the implications. For example, peers of hearing impaired students need to know the effect of extraneous noise on amplification systems, peers of autistic students may need to understand the reasons for some of their actions.

Sign language groups have been provided in the past when we have a deaf/hearing impaired student who uses sign, to encourage communication, empathy and understanding, as well as the learning of a useful skill. Lessening the isolation of hearing impaired students is a major

factor in enabling them to benefit from attendance at William Morris and enjoy their education.

The SENCo is responsible for making special arrangements for students sitting examinations; these have included in the past students on the autistic spectrum, those with spina bifida, cerebral palsy, other physical and sensory disabilities, medical conditions and dyslexia. Arrangements include provision of enlarged print papers, readers, amanuensis, permission to type rather than handwrite responses, an additional time allowance and separate rooms for students who may suffer fits or need rest breaks, prompts etc.

A designated teacher and HLTAs in the learning support team work closely with the higher education progression co-ordinator and with students making the transition to higher education. They have built up a useful knowledge of the facilities and provision of the various universities for students with SEN, physical disabilities and sensory impairments. They liaise with disability officers, organising preliminary visits with students and accompanying them to interviews if this is useful; they give help writing personal statements and arrange assessments for the Student Disability Allowance. This staff members have also continued to support some of these students following their transition to university, most notably a severely disabled young wheelchair user, for whom she arranged community service volunteers (CSVs) and continued to monitor the service they provided and relationship with the student.

We also bring in an access arrangements tester in some cases. The SENCo works with the Learning Support administrative assistant to make+ applications for special exam arrangements and supervises these (often complex) arrangements, for which personal knowledge and understanding of the student's special needs is essential, as well as detailed knowledge and understanding of the various modifications to papers and provision for special needs by the different exam boards.

5) STAFF TRAINING

This Accessibility Plan is approved by the WMSF leadership group, who take overall responsibility for its implementation.

It is the responsibility of the Learning Support area to provide information and training for staff on the provisions of SEN Code of Practice (2015) and its implications for the Sixth Form.

Meetings of staff involved with particular students take place on a regular basis, both formal and informal.

Information and advice relating to particular disabilities (e.g. autism/Asperger's, physical disabilities, visual and hearing impairment, ADHD and dyslexia) is circulated as appropriate with provision maps and at other times as needed.

Teachers from the Sensory and Language Impairment Team run sessions for teachers of visually and hearing impaired students, which explain the effects of the disability and guide teachers in good practice.

The Speech and Language Therapy team provides training to explain the nature of difficulties with verbal communication and to share strategies that can be used by teachers with their students.

Teachers from the Learning Support Team attend relevant training sessions, in line with the WMSF staff development policy, and share information with other teachers.

6) CURRENT BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Classrooms are carpeted but not insulated to reduce background noise for hearing impaired students. We do, however, explain the effect of a noisy background on wearers of hearing aids to the classmates of these students and are usually successful in keeping noise levels down.

We do not have flashing fire alarms for deaf students, which would be a safety precaution in the toilets where a student could possibly be overlooked in the event of an emergency. In the interim fire marshals will check toilet cubicles in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Successful inclusion is dependent on the knowledge, skills and understanding of teachers, so information and guidance needs to be consistently reinforced and updated through an ongoing process of training, information sharing, guidance on SEND Provision maps etc.

7) PLANS TO ELIMINATE EXISTING AND POTENTIAL BARRIERS

- Further discussion about solution to problem of swing doors, which are a hazard for physically disabled and visually impaired students. Doorguards have, however, been fitted to allow the fire doors to remain open during school hours and close on the activation of the Fire Alarm sounding.
- Additional large screen computer monitors to be acquired as needed.
- Ongoing training and advice to be provided for teachers.

8) NON PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

We have recently given more thought to non-physical barriers to inclusion. These mainly affect students with an invisible disability, very commonly those on medication for various conditions. Young people suffering from depression, schizophrenia, Tourettes syndrome and ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder) are commonly prescribed medication, some of which has an extremely debilitating effect. Antipsychotic drugs (the prescription of which is not confined to those with psychotic disorders) commonly result in extreme lethargy, weight gain and difficulties with concentration and organisation.

Students taking medication and students with particular conditions, e.g. Asperger's syndrome and dyspraxia, may find it very hard to arrive on time for classes and with the correct equipment. Support for them can consist of regular telephone calls and texts to remind them of times and places where they should be, liaison with their teachers, provision of water and breaks in double lessons. We also have a useful link with the community mental health early intervention service based at Charing Cross Hospital.

In the case of these students, as for students with any disability, the behaviour policy is differentiated to take account of the effects of the disability or medication that has been prescribed. Rules pertaining to punctuality, for example, may need to be dis-applied if the inability to arrive on time on a regular basis is either a symptom of the disability or an effect of the medication.

Students with ongoing and significant medical needs have Medical Needs Plans to ensure that these needs are not overlooked through lack of proper liaison and co-ordination. There is a medical needs co-ordinator who works alongside the school nurse to ensure that staff are aware and trained to support with students medical needs. They also keep up-to-date records of students with medical needs, and liaise with Medical Needs Units to continue to support students.