

The Willows School Academy Trust



Accessibility Plan

Reviewed: March 2026

Next Review: March 2027

Introduction and Vision

Under the Equality Act 2010, all schools must have an accessibility plan. This plan sets out how The Willows School Academy Trust will increase access to education for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) over a three-year period.

The purpose of this plan is to:

- Increase the extent to which pupils with SEN can participate fully in the curriculum
- Improve the physical environment of the school to enable pupils with SEN to take better advantage of the education, benefits, facilities and services provided
- Improve the availability and delivery of information to pupils with SEN in formats that are accessible to them

Our guiding principle is inclusion. We value every pupil equally and are committed to identifying, understanding and removing barriers to learning and participation. Every pupil with SEN need has the right to achieve their full potential within our school community.

Our Vision for Accessibility

At The Willows School Academy Trust, we are committed to supporting all children by:

- Creating a positive, nurturing environment where children feel happy, safe, respected and valued
- Setting high expectations for all pupils and challenging them to achieve their best through personalised support
- Quickly identifying any areas of difficulty that pupils may have
- Removing barriers to allow pupils to achieve those expectations through accessible resources, differentiation and reasonable adjustments
- Providing opportunities and experiences that enable pupils to develop the skills, confidence and independence needed for successful adulthood
- Equipping pupils with communication, social and life skills appropriate to their individual needs

We recognise that our pupils have a diverse range of needs—including communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health needs, and sensory or physical needs—and we are committed to meeting these needs through flexible, responsive provision.

Our Core Values

These values underpin all aspects of our accessibility planning and inclusive practice:

- **Fairness** – treating everyone equitably and making reasonable adjustments
- **Compassion** – understanding and responding to individual needs with empathy
- **Tolerance** – respecting and celebrating differences
- **Friendliness** – creating a welcoming, inclusive community
- **Endeavour** – working together to overcome barriers and achieve success

Legal Framework and Definition of Disability

This accessibility plan meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and follows the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on the Equality Act 2010.

Definition of Disability

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as:

"A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

Under the SEND Code of Practice:

- **Long-term** means a year or more
- **Substantial** means more than minor or trivial

This definition includes, but is not limited to:

- Sensory impairments (e.g., vision or hearing loss)
- Physical disabilities and mobility impairments
- Long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, cancer
- Learning disabilities and specific learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia, dyspraxia)
- Autistic Spectrum Condition
- Speech, language and communication needs
- Mental health conditions
- Conditions that are progressive (e.g., muscular dystrophy)

Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must make reasonable adjustments to ensure pupils with SEN are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to their non-SEN peers.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- Changes to practices, policies or procedures
- Provision of auxiliary aids or services (e.g., specialist equipment, communication aids)
- Physical alterations to the school building or environment

The school will:

- Consider each pupil's needs individually
- Consult with pupils, parents and professionals
- Implement adjustments in a timely manner
- Review the effectiveness of adjustments regularly
- Not charge for reasonable adjustments

Consultation and Involvement

This accessibility plan has been developed through consultation with:

- Pupils (through pupil voice activities appropriate to their needs)
- Parents and carers (through surveys, meetings and informal feedback)
- Staff (through staff meetings and individual discussions)
- Governors (through governing body meetings)
- External professionals (including therapists and LA advisors)

We will continue to involve stakeholders by:

- Conducting an annual accessibility audit (using a separate working document)
- Gathering feedback from pupils, parents and staff regularly
- Consulting on proposed changes and improvements
- Reporting progress to governors termly
- Publishing this plan on our website and making it available in alternative formats on request

This accessibility plan should be read in conjunction with:

- **SEND Policy**
- **Equality & Diversity Policy**
- **Asthma, Anaphylaxis and Allergen Policy**
- **Administering Medication Policy**
- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**
- **Health and Safety Policy**
- **Admissions Policy**
- **Curriculum Policy**
- **Assessment Policy**
- **IQM Centre of Excellence documentation**

All of these policies are available on our school website or on request from the school office.

Current Provision and Context

The Willows School Academy Trust is a special school for pupils with a range of special educational needs and disabilities. All of our pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our current pupil population includes pupils with:

- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
- Social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)
- Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)
- Severe learning difficulties (SLD)
- Medical needs

Current Accessibility Provision

Curriculum Access:

- Highly differentiated curriculum tailored to individual needs
- Specialist teaching approaches (e.g., TEACCH, sensory integration, communication strategies)
- Use of visual supports, symbols and communication aids throughout the school
- Access to therapies including Speech and Language Therapy and Brick Therapy
- Individual Healthcare Plans and Behaviour Support Plans for pupils who need them
- Personalised timetables and learning environments
- Regular staff training in SEND, communication, behaviour support and inclusive practice

Physical Environment:

- Wide corridors to accommodate mobility aids
- Sensory rooms and calming spaces
- Outdoor learning areas
- Visual signage

Information Access:

- Use of visual timetables, symbols and communication aids
- Information provided in simplified language and visual formats
- Regular communication with families through multiple channels
- Translation services available when needed
- Accessible school website

Our Commitment to Inclusive Excellence

The Willows School Academy Trust is proud to be an **IQM (Inclusive Quality Mark) Centre of Excellence**. This accreditation recognizes our outstanding inclusive practice and our commitment to ensuring that all pupils, regardless of their needs, can access high-quality education and achieve their full potential.

As an IQM Centre of Excellence, we:

- Demonstrate exceptional inclusive practice across all areas of school life
- Set high expectations for all pupils and remove barriers to learning
- Provide high-quality professional development for staff in inclusive practice
- Work in partnership with families, professionals and the wider community
- Continuously evaluate and improve our provision
- Share our expertise with other schools and settings

Working Towards IQM Flagship Status

We are currently working towards **IQM Flagship status**, which represents the highest level of inclusive practice. This demonstrates our ambition to be at the forefront of inclusive education and to continually raise standards for all our pupils.

Our journey towards Flagship status includes:

- Further developing our inclusive curriculum and teaching approaches
- Enhancing our physical environment to be fully accessible
- Strengthening our partnerships with families and external agencies
- Embedding innovative practice in accessibility and inclusion
- Leading and supporting other schools in developing inclusive practice
- Demonstrating sustained excellence in all aspects of accessibility

This accessibility plan is a key part of our journey towards IQM Flagship status and reflects our commitment to continuous improvement in accessibility and inclusion.

Three-Year Accessibility Action Plan

This section sets out our specific, measurable targets for improving accessibility over the next three years. These actions support our journey towards IQM Flagship status and ensure we continue to provide outstanding inclusive practice.

Actions are organized under the three key areas required by the Equality Act 2010.

Key to Action Plan:

- **Priority:** H = High, M = Medium, L = Low
- **Success Criteria:** How we will know the action has been successful
- **IQM Link:** How this action supports our IQM Flagship journey

Area 1: Increased access to the curriculum

Action	Priority	By	Success Criteria
Review and enhance all curriculum areas to exemplify best practice	H	Jul 26	Curriculum documentation includes accessibility. Staff can articulate inclusive approaches. Evidence of impact on outcomes.
Implement whole-school communication strategy with visual supports and symbols	H	Sep 26	All classrooms have visual timetables. Measurable improvement in pupil communication.
Audit and enhance sensory provision	H	Dec 26	Every classroom has a reflection area. Equipment audit complete. Reduction in sensory incidents.
Develop outstanding staff training: autism, SEMH, communication, behaviour support	H	Ongoing	Staff training completed. Staff confidence improves. Quality of teaching improves. Training shared with other schools.
Review and enhance access to assistive technology for specific pupils	M	Mar 27	Specific pupils assessed for AT. Staff trained. Pupil progress improves. Innovative practice documented.
Develop exemplary transition pathways to support successful transitions	M	Jul 27	Clear transition pathways. Successful transitions to next phase. Transition practice recognized as outstanding.
Implement integrated therapeutic interventions (SaLT and Brick Therapy)	H	Sep 27	All pupils participate in daily morning speaking and listening activities. Specific pupils receive regular SaLT and Brick Therapy. Measurable progress.
Review and enhance assessment approaches for full accessibility	M	Dec 27	Assessment policy updated. Range of methods used. All pupils demonstrate learning effectively.
Develop outstanding outdoor learning curriculum accessible to all	M	Mar 28	Outdoor areas fully utilized. Range of activities available. All pupils participate meaningfully.

Develop partnerships with other schools, demonstrating leadership	M	Jul 28	School recognized as leader.
Document and share outstanding inclusive practice with other schools	H	Ongoing	Case studies documented. School hosts visits. Staff present IQM cluster meetings. School Recognized as leader.

Area 2: Improving the physical environment

Action	Priority	By	Success Criteria
Conduct comprehensive accessibility audit using IQM Flagship criteria	H	Jun 26	Audit complete using Flagship standards. Priority areas identified. Action plan created.
Enhance visual signage to exemplify best practice	H	Sep 26	All areas clearly signposted with symbols and photos. Pupils navigate independently. Shared with others.
Develop outdoor learning areas as exemplary accessible provision	M	Jul 27	All outdoor areas accessible. Varied learning opportunities. Recognized as outstanding.
Ensure all classrooms have optimal furniture and equipment	H	Ongoing	All pupils have appropriate seating and equipment. Regular reviews. Pupil engagement improves.
Review and enhance hygiene facilities to highest accessibility standards	M	Dec 27	Facilities audit complete. Improvements made. Well-maintained and recognized as best practice.
Optimize storage and accessibility of specialist equipment	M	Mar 28	Equipment stored safely and accessibly. Staff access quickly. Solutions shared as best practice.
Ensure emergency evacuation procedures exemplify best practice	H	Jun 28	Routes accessible. Regular drills successful. Recognized as exemplary.

Area 3: Improving the delivery of information

Action	Priority	By	Success Criteria
Conduct comprehensive audit of information accessibility using IQM criteria	H	Jun 26	Audit complete using Flagship standards. Gaps identified. Action plan created.
Ensure website exceeds accessibility standards (WCAG 2.1 AA)	H	Sep 26	Website audit complete. Issues addressed. Accessibility statement published. Recognized as exemplary.
Develop exemplary range of accessible communication formats	H	Dec 26	Templates for multiple formats. Documents in visual, simplified, symbol, audio. Families report excellent understanding.
Implement outstanding system for alternative format requests	H	Mar 27	Clear process in place. Staff trained. Requests responded to within 3 days. Recognized as best practice.
Review and enhance all communications to exemplify best practice	M	Jul 27	All communications improved. Plain English and visual supports used. Parent feedback positive.

Provide outstanding staff training on accessible communication	M	Dec 27	All staff trained to high standard. Staff confident and skilled. Staff share expertise with other schools.
Develop exemplary visual and symbol-based information for pupils	H	Mar 28	High-quality visual information throughout. Pupils access independently. Understanding improves significantly.
Ensure all digital platforms exemplify accessibility best practice	M	Jul 28	Audit of digital resources complete. All resources accessible. All pupils access online learning effectively.
Develop outstanding parent communication strategy	M	Mar 29	Parent survey shows excellent results. Multiple accessible channels. High engagement. Shared as best practice.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Progress against this accessibility plan will be monitored termly by the SLT, with an annual accessibility audit conducted using IQM Flagship criteria. We will evaluate impact by tracking pupil progress and achievement, monitoring attendance and engagement, gathering feedback from pupils, parents and staff, and measuring progress against IQM Flagship criteria. We will report to governors on progress towards IQM Flagship status, and publish the updated plan on our website.

The next annual review will take place in March 2027, with the full three-year plan reviewed and a new plan developed in March 2029. While this plan sets out our strategic approach, we recognise that individual pupils may have specific needs requiring immediate attention, and as an IQM Centre of Excellence working towards Flagship status, we are committed to responding promptly and effectively to individual needs through reasonable adjustments, individual risk assessments, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), and regular reviews of Individual Healthcare Plans and Educational Health Care plans.

Signed: M. Shaw
Headteacher

Bal Grant
Chair of Governors

Date: March 2026