

# Accessibility Plan 2024-2027



## 1. Introduction

Schools are required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an accessibility plan. The purpose of the plan is to:

- ▲ Increase the extent to which students with disabilities can participate in the curriculum;
- ▲ Improve the physical environment of the school to enable students with disabilities to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities and services provided;
- ▲ Improve the availability of accessible information to students with disabilities.

The College aims to treat all its students fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all students without discrimination of any kind.

We recognise the need to provide adequate resources for implementing plans and will regularly review them.

The plan is available on the College website and paper copies are available upon request.

The College is committed to ensuring staff are trained in equality issues with reference to the Equality Act 2010, including understanding disability issues.

The College supports any available partnerships to develop and implement the plan.

Any concerns relating to accessibility in college should be raised following the College Complaints Policy.

A range of stakeholders were involved in the development of this accessibility plan, including students, parents, staff and governors of the College.

## 1.1 Legislation and Guidance

This document meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on their ability to undertake normal day to day activities.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, 'long-term' is defined as 'a year or more' and 'substantial' is defined as 'more than minor or trivial'. The definition includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for students with disabilities under the Equality Act 2010, to alleviate any substantial disadvantage that a student with disabilities faces in comparison with a student without disabilities. This can include, for example, the provision of an auxiliary aid or adjustments to premises.

People who have been disabled in the past (for example, those who have had cancer or a history of mental illness), are covered by the legislation surrounding disabilities for the rest of their life.

## 2. Vision and values

The College values all students and staff and wishes to ensure that its practices are fully inclusive. No student or member of staff should be disadvantaged by reason of disability. As such, the College will in all cases make reasonable adjustments to accommodate staff and students with disabilities.

## 3. Context

Current student data shows that at the start of the academic year 2024-25 the College has 264 students regarded as disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). These can be grouped as:

- ▲ Sensory impaired – 21
- ▲ Physical mobility problems (including non-wheelchair users) – 5
- ▲ Autistic – 62
- ▲ ADHD – 30
- ▲ Long term medical needs – 6
- ▲ Speech and language difficulties – 53
- ▲ Specific learning difficulty – 87

Some of these students regarded as disabled under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act may have more than one condition.

#### **4. Determining priorities and principles**

In order to inform planning, the College will analyse information about:

- ▲ The nature of the College population including students not yet attending but expected to;
- ▲ The nature of the College, including a consideration of the impact of the College's existing plans and priorities.

The College regularly reviews its strengths and weaknesses in working with disabled students, including:

- ▲ The level of staff awareness of equalities legislation.
- ▲ The presence of disabled students and their participation in college life, for example, patterns of attendance and exclusions; areas of the curriculum to which disabled students have limited or no access; the participation of disabled students in after college clubs and college visits; parts of the college site to which disabled students have no or limited access.
- ▲ The impact on disabled students of the way the College is organised, for example, College policies and practices around the administration of medicines; timetabling; anti-bullying policy; college trips; and teaching and learning.
- ▲ The physical environment of the College.
- ▲ The curriculum.
- ▲ The ways in which information is provided for disabled students.
- ▲ Outcomes for disabled students.

##### **4.1 Involving disabled people**

The plan is informed by:

- ▲ The views and aspirations of disabled students themselves;
- ▲ The views and aspirations of the families of disabled students;
- ▲ The views and aspirations of other disabled people or voluntary organisations.

##### **4.2 The plans**

Planning improvements cover the following areas:

- ▲ The physical environment
- ▲ Access to education, benefits, facilities and services (the whole of college life).
- ▲ Access to information usually provided in written form

### 4.3 Information Gathering

The College holds extensive information on all students attending the college. Information about students with disabilities is gathered in various ways.

During the transition process when students join the College at the start of Year 7:

- ▲ The SENDCo, and the Head of Year 7 or another relevant member of staff, will visit all future students in their primary schools.
- ▲ The primary schools send information to the College at the point of transfer.
- ▲ The College holds a Parents' Evening where the parents/carers of future students meet their child's tutor.
- ▲ There is an enhanced transition programme for students with disabilities which, in addition to two regular transition days, offers three enhanced transition sessions (after school), and an additional transition session for students with a place in one of the Enhanced Resource Provision units.

For students attending the college:

- ▲ Parents' Evenings and Annual Review meetings are attended by parents/carers and relevant members of staff.
- ▲ Class teachers and other staff will share information relating to their observation and assessment of students with the SENDCo on an informal basis and at fixed review points such as Annual Reviews.
- ▲ All students with SEN have a designated member of staff from the College SEND team with whom they meet informally. There is a termly review with this member of staff and parents/carers.
- ▲ Students with disabilities who have an EHCP have a statutory Annual Review. The Local Authority, parents/carers and associated external professionals will be invited to this review, chaired by the SENDCo. The provision for students with disabilities will be reviewed to determine whether it allows the needs of the child to be met.
- ▲ Students with disabilities whose needs are (currently) met under SEN Support have their needs assessed and, where appropriate, will have a Learning Passport. This is written in conjunction with the SENDCo, parents/carers and other professionals.
- ▲ The SENDCo hosts a regular 'student voice' activity where a focus group of students with additional needs and/or disabilities have the opportunity to express their views on all aspects of the College.
- ▲ Where other professional are involved in the care of a student, the College liaises directly with them to ensure the needs of the student are met.

## 5. The College

### 5.1 Physical environment

The Spires College main site has two premises: the main college and a suite of rooms leased from Torquay United (underneath the main stand). The College also has an off-site playing field, located approximately 0.5 miles from the main site, and utilises local sports facilities including a swimming pool and tennis centre.

The main college building was constructed in 2001 and is equipped with lift access to both upper levels. Emergency evacuation procedures are in place and equipment is provided where appropriate, with suitable training in place to ensure that wheelchair users and others with disabilities can be evacuated safely. Contingency plans are in place if the lift breaks down at any point in the day.

There is level access to the rooms within Torquay United's stand through almost all the building. Where there is stepped access to the emergency fire exit at one end of this space ramps for wheelchair users have been provided.

All three sites are equipped with disabled toilet facilities and the main site has a toilet room with changing facilities. The main site also has gender neutral toilets on the ground floor.

Arrangements are made for students with disabilities to be dropped off close to the College entrance which offers level access to the two main buildings. Parking is not permitted in these drop off areas and College staff ensure that they are available when needed. The College also has designated disabled parking with level access to the main college buildings that can be used by parents/carers with disabilities.

The College does not have powered doors that would permit unaccompanied access so wheelchair users are provided with assistance to navigate around the site, although the majority of circulation spaces are accessible to all. The College has a large number of fire doors within corridors all of which have been equipped with door retention mechanisms keeping them open to allow for easier access through the building. These doors will automatically close if the fire alarm is activated to keep fire compartmentalised within the building.

The College can provide specialist furniture and equipment (e.g. desks and chairs) when required so that all students can access the curriculum, liaising with Occupational Therapists and/or Physiotherapists where this is appropriate.

The College canteen and dining area, whilst accessible to wheelchair users, does not have any special arrangements for serving food to wheelchair users or special dining tables. Where the dining facilities may be difficult to access for individual students, food/drink is ordered in advance and taken to the SEND department for students to collect.

Students who need assistance in ordering and collecting food in the canteen have a pass to go to lunch early and are supported by an LSA where this is needed. If appropriate, students with SEND may eat their lunch in the SEND Department where a family-style lunch environment is provided.

The College has two Local Authority Enhanced Provisions; one for students with an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and one for those with a Hearing Impairment (HI). The physical environment in both provisions have been adapted to meet the needs of these students, with the HI Provision maintaining a supply of relevant equipment.

The College's external areas are accessible with the Multi Use Games Area having ramped access as well as stepped. The local swimming pool and tennis centre used by the college have level access and disabled changing facilities, and the pool has a hoist. Transport arrangements are in place for travel to and from the tennis centre and the college's playing fields when this is required.

The College had an Environmental Audit in June 2022 to support us in identifying areas that may need consideration to make them fully accessible for individuals with visual impairment.

## **5.2 Access to the curriculum**

All areas of the curriculum should be available to students regardless of their disability. Where an activity cannot be made accessible or would be inappropriate, an alternative activity is offered. For example:

- ▲ Where a particular type of physical education is not accessible to a student an alternative physical activity is offered.
- ▲ Laptops are made available for students with physical disabilities that impair their ability to write by hand.

Adaptations made for students tend to be bespoke with the student's individual needs taken into consideration. Planning to improve access to the curriculum involves identifying reasonable adjustments that will offer an equality of opportunity.

The College employs a team of Specialist Teachers and Specialist Learning Support Assistants to ensure curriculum accessibility for every student.

Students with hearing impairments can utilise an assisted learning device (ALD), which streams to their hearing aid. Staff regularly receive training updates relating to working with students who have hearing difficulties.

Depending on the impairments of disabled students, specific staff training is planned to support improved access to the curriculum. The SENDCo provides regular training updates for staff relating to the needs of individual students with disabilities and the College will also access training from other sources where this is appropriate.

Purchasing specialist equipment increases access to the curriculum for disabled students. The College will always consider the purchase of books with large print, writing slopes and pencil grips, or adjustable desks and chairs.

The College's playing field has a changing room for users with a disability, but there needs to be a review of the site access arrangements and a review of other barriers to inclusion in activities on the field.

The participation of disabled students is monitored by the SENDCo as part of the College's Monitoring and Self Evaluation Process.

Students with disabilities are included in College trips and visits. Inaccessible venues are not chosen if the group has a student who cannot access the venue; instead an alternative venue is used. If specialist transport or other equipment is needed for a student to be involved in a particular trip/event, this is considered when planning the trip.

The SENDCo liaises regularly with professionals who work with individual students to ensure that our practice is as advised, planned accordingly, and enables good student progress. We also provide further therapies in College to maintain and enable good holistic development. Professionals we work with regularly include:

- ▲ Occupational Therapists
- ▲ Physiotherapists
- ▲ Educational Psychologists
- ▲ Speech and Language Therapists
- ▲ NHS School Nurses
- ▲ CAMHS Team
- ▲ Paediatric specialists
- ▲ Hearing and Visual Impaired Advisory Teachers.

### **5.3 Access to written information**

The College issues individualised Learning Passports for every student that is identified as having an additional educational need and provided with on SEN Support. Students with an EHCP have an Individual Education Plan which includes the long-term targets from their EHCP. Learning Passports and Individual Education Plans include guidance on best practice to support students' individual needs, including those with Dyslexia and other Speech and Language Difficulties.

The College will take steps to make reasonable adjustments to allow students and parents/carers with visual needs to access letters or other communications from the College.

When required, the College will conduct an IT or learning accessibility assessment in conjunction with the Visual Impairment or ICT outreach services.

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2025-2028

### Physical Environment

Action	Resources Required	Expected Outcomes	Timeframe	Lead
Exterior steps to be marked clearly	This will be undertaken as “small works” funded by college revenue resources	Ensure all students with a visual disability can navigate exterior steps safely.	Easter 2025	CLE
Review colour contrast of door handles and other door/office furniture to ensure it is appropriate for those with visual impairment	CLE to complete review	Improved access to all areas withing the building.	September 2025	CLE
All stairs to have appropriate nosings to clearly identify them as stairs to those with visual impairment	To be completed as stairwell floorings are replaced (so no additional resources required)	Ensure all students with a visual disability can navigate the whole college safely.	Ongoing	CLE
Review of the playing fields to consider what, if any, improvements are required to improve accessibility	CLE to complete review of area and facilities	Plan created of what alterations may be needed to improve accessibility	September 2025	CLE

### Access to the Curriculum

Action	Resources Required	Expected Outcomes	Timeframe	Lead
Review current access to extra-curricular clubs; are students with disabilities currently accessing these and, if not, what are the barriers to them doing so	HST to collect data from clubs and then discuss with students if necessary.	Students with disabilities take up of extra-curricular clubs and other opportunities improved	August 2025	HST

### Access to Written Information

Action	Resources Required	Expected Outcomes	Timeframe	Lead
Keep access to written information under review.	Staff time	Any new issues regarding access to written information are identified quickly and resolved.	Ongoing	HST