



From mountain to sea

HORSE RIDING (RDA) FOR PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Guidance to schools

September 2017



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Version	Status	Date	Reason for update
2.0	Guidance	2013	Previous documents out of date
3.0	Guidance	May 2017	Update due to agreement with staff to act as education representatives for RDA and new terminology/designations
3.1	Guidance	September 2017	GIRFEC information and enable hyperlinks

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Introduction

A number of pupils with additional support needs attending Aberdeenshire schools participate in horse riding through the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA).

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure equity of provision for all pupils by providing information and advice to schools on criteria for selection of pupils, the process for arranging access to RDA through the Authority and with individual RDA centres, and arrangements for funding.

GIRFEC

Children and young people have their needs assessed on an individual basis and support will be provided as required in line with [GIRFEC](#). The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a national approach to improving the Wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland.

Specific indicators relevant to this guidance are:

- Improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Increase prevention and earlier intervention so all children and young people are supported to achieve their potential
- Achieve high standards of multi-agency working, based on a co-ordinated approach to identifying Wellbeing concerns, assessing need, and agreeing outcomes and actions.

Please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for more information about GIRFEC and the 5 questions, together with [website links](#).

Allied Health Professionals provide targeted interventions to secure outcomes as detailed in [Ready to Act](#) (participation and engagement, early intervention and prevention, partnership and integration, access, and leadership for quality improvement). There is a statutory requirement for education authorities and their partners to work together to ensure the wellbeing needs of the child/young person as detailed in the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).

Benefits of Riding for the Disabled

The walking horse produces 1000 movements in three dimensions in 10 minutes. This requires the rider to make an active response to the movement in order to stay in balance. The movement of the horse is the same as the movement of normal walking, therefore it stimulates the activity of the muscles used in walking. Where sitting balance is achieved the rider's hands are freed for skilled activity and social skills can be developed. This allows the rider to become proactive, to affect the movement of the horse and to achieve an increasing degree of independence.

Where children and young people have a physical disability, the movement of the horse will therefore improve balance and coordination. For those with multiple disabilities, the effect of the movement of the horse will have a positive effect in normalising movement. However, if the rider does not have head / trunk control or

has a reduced degree of head / trunk control, advice would be sought from the RDA ACPTR qualified physiotherapist for the Region. There are some conditions for which riding would be detrimental, and therefore not appropriate.

Children and young people with learning delays and difficulties can also benefit from riding. Balance and coordination must be learnt together with a requirement for concentration on the task to achieve a positive outcome. The enjoyment and motivation from these achievements are important in developing confidence and positive self-esteem.

Children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder benefit from riding due to the fact that the environment in which riding takes place is conducive to the development of social skills. The riders work with helpers and instructors who are interested in the welfare of the horse as well as the rider, and can share this enthusiasm. Riders are expected to show respect for the horse and to acknowledge the help they are getting from the volunteers. These are important social skills.

In the first instance youngsters may find it easier to establish a form of communication with a horse which does not respond verbally. This skill in turn supports development of communication with human adults and peers. Youngsters can be taught to notice the non-verbal communications from horses such as ears back or forwards, eyes calm, head up or down and learn the meaning behind these subtle messages. The ability to understand body language is very important to human interactions.

Criteria for Selection of Pupils

Participation in horse riding should enable pupils to benefit more fully from the education provision available to them.

Recommendation for participation should be on a multiagency basis and may include advice from the education psychologist, community paediatrician, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), social work or another agency working with education to meet the needs of the child / young person.

All pupils participating must therefore have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which clearly specifies an objective for which horse riding is an appropriate resource.

The IEP should specify:

- a) The target/s supported by horse riding
- b) The duration and frequency of riding lessons
- c) Clear success criteria
- d) How these are to be monitored

Review of the targets should be in line with IEP review, and a decision to continue or cease the riding will be made in response to progress.

Due to the demand for places at RDA sessions, it is unlikely that a child/young person will continue to ride for more than 2 years other than in exceptional circumstances.

Process of arranging access to RDA lessons

There are two components to this:

1. Agreement and funding of the RDA place with the authority
2. Application to the local RDA centre for a place for the pupil to attend

Agreement with the authority would be recorded through submission of the checklist in [Appendix 2](#), which should be passed to the **education representative** for the RDA group to which the pupil is applying. For each RDA group there is an educational representative who is either a PT ASL (academy) or DHT in a primary/special school/community resource hub.

The checklist enables the authority to keep track of the number of pupils, duration of individual support and the distribution of places according to needs throughout Aberdeenshire. This is in-line with the Additional Support Needs (Education) (Scotland) Act 2004 amended 2009, and The Equalities Act 2010.

Application to individual RDA centres is then progressed by the school contacting the local centre, and submitting necessary RDA paperwork which is sourced from their website: <http://www.rda.org.uk>

Current forms from the RDA consist of an application for riding/vaulting, and a medical form to be completed by parents/GP. Please see: <http://www.rda.org.uk/runningyourgroup/> to obtain the forms.

A child / young person may be put on a waiting list by the RDA if all places are taken at that time.

If there is a high priority for a place due to an urgent additional support need, the school may also contact the local education representative who can negotiate with the RDA and other schools using the RDA facility to try to make a place available as soon as possible.

The RDA Tracker

RDA have produced their own tracker to describe progress in the following six areas: communication, physical changes, relationships, horsemanship, confidence and enjoyment. Schools will have targets for pupils in one or more of these areas, but horsemanship/enjoyment alone would not be appropriate. The child's additional support needs would require targets in areas such as communication, social skills, posture/movement, confidence and/or self-esteem.

School IEP targets are positively worded for each child, and begin from a current point of achievement. School targets for communication, relationships and physical skills are likely to have been devised in collaboration with allied health professionals.

School staff must share their objectives for each child with the RDA coordinator and volunteers in order to ensure that everyone is clear about the aims of the sessions, and schools are responsible for tracking and monitoring progress against the specific IEP target.

Understanding by RDA volunteers should have been facilitated by the development of the tracker and education staff can now be confident of using terminology that is understood by both schools and RDA supporters.

A copy of the tracker is in [Appendix 3](#)

Funding Arrangements

There are three aspects to funding:

- a) Riding for the Disabled Association lessons
- b) Transport
- c) Staff to support pupils

To ensure equity for all schools the following arrangements are in place:

Riding for the Disabled Association lessons

These will be fully funded by the Authority. Invoices should be sent to:

The Quality Improvement Manager (Additional Support Needs)

Aberdeenshire Council,

Woodhill House,

Westburn Road,

Aberdeen AB16 5GJ

Transport

This will not be funded by the Authority (other than in exceptional circumstances when a decision may be taken at authority level by a Quality Improvement Officer for an individual circumstance), as all support will be directed towards supporting the cost of lessons.

Schools may wish to offer financial support for transport to children from low income families whose parents are in receipt of benefits, should this be required to permit attendance. This will be at the discretion of the head teacher, and sourced from school funds.

Staff to support pupils

Schools may choose to allocate a member of the support staff from their team to accompany youngsters, at the discretion of the headteacher.



Appendix 1: GIRFEC information and the 5 questions

GIRFEC sets out a vision which aims to:

- Improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.
- Put the child or young person at the centre of any assessment, planning and support, actively promoting their participation and engagement in any processes.
- Proactively seek the views of children, young people and their families, providing information and support which encourages involvement.
- Promote shared language through a [National Practice Model](#) providing a consistent approach to safeguard, ensure and promote the Wellbeing of children and young people.
- Streamline assessment, planning and decision-making processes via a single planning framework – called the Child’s Plan – to ensure a consistent approach to how a range of extra support that is not generally available should be planned, delivered and coordinated around an individual child’s needs and circumstances.
- Increase prevention and earlier intervention so all children and young people are supported to achieve their potential
- Achieve high standards of multi-agency working, based on a co-ordinated approach to identifying Wellbeing concerns, assessing need, and agreeing outcomes and actions.
- Maximise the skills of the Universal Services workforce, and focus targeted and specialist services to meet the needs of children and young people where higher thresholds of risk and need exist
- Embed individual and unique professional responsibility and accountability towards supporting children and young people
- Support proportionate and considered sharing of Wellbeing information, in line with Data Protection, other legislative requirements, confidentiality and the views of families.
- Ensure a [Named Person](#) is available as a central point of contact for children, young people and parents, to provide advice, information, and support, and help to access other services if and when needed
- Identify a [Lead Professional](#) where a Child’s Plan is in place, to co-ordinate and monitor progress of actions and improved outcomes.

The Five GIRFEC Questions

A child or young person’s Wellbeing is influenced by everything around them, and by different needs they will have at different points of their life. Wellbeing concerns may arise from a child or young person’s individual experiences or circumstance, or be posed by the impact of a family member or significant person’s situation (this could include a non-resident partner of a parent/carer, or a peer).

When a Wellbeing concern is identified or raised for a child or young person, you should ask yourself the 5 GIRFEC questions:

1. **What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?**
2. **Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?**
3. **What can I do now to help this child or young person?**
4. **What can my service or organisation do to help this child or young person?**
5. **What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?**

If you don't have all the information you need, you may need to gather further information either by speaking with the child or young person themselves, their parents or carers, or from other people within your own, or other agencies. This will ensure you have as full a picture as possible to inform your own assessment, and informs any Request for Assistance made to other agencies if needed.

Findings from recent Significant Case Reviews tell us that sharing the right information at the right time can help improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. It can often help prevent low level concerns growing into more serious or entrenched difficulties. In the majority of cases, Wellbeing concerns should be openly discussed with the child, young person, family members or other person, including explicit discussions* around what information may need to be shared, why, and with whom.

**Unless there are child protection concerns*.*

Child Protection Prompt: If at any point concerns are raised which suggests a child or young person is at risk, of harm or neglect, or potentially at risk of harm or neglect, Child Protection Procedures must be followed without delay.

Please refer to the [Aberdeenshire GIRFEC](#) website for more information.

Appendix 2 Checklist and information for horse riding

Name of child / young person	
School attended	
Date of Birth	
Factors giving rise to the additional support needs	
Date of commencement of RDA lessons (or proposed date)	

Plans in place: There **MUST** be a target provided in a **full IEP** (not a personal learning plan or group plan)

Individual Education Plan

Risk assessment

Managing Accessibility Plan

Other, please specify

Transport provided by:

Parent / Carer

School

Other, please specify

Support staff provided by school to accompany child / young person Yes No**RDA centre to be attended:** Deeside RDA group, Aboyne Buchan RDA group, Ellon Gordon RDA group, Inverurie Moray RDA group, Elgin Strathbogie RDA group, Oyne Aberdeen RDA group, Milltimber**Frequency of participation** Weekly Fortnightly**Duration** Block of lessons (4-5 weeks) Two terms One term (minimum 8 weeks) Academic year

Appendix 3 The RDA Tracker

Communication

1. No attempt to communicate by any means (sound, touch, eye contact, gesture) with pony or people
2. Attempts to communicate, positively or negatively by any means
3. Communication is basic, quite limited but consistent and with clear intention
4. Able to communicate and respond to communication from others
5. Communicates own wants, needs and experiences freely and with clear intention. Understands and responds to what is communicated to them if it is age and ability appropriate.

Confidence

1. Lacks confidence, won't try or engage, blocks coach
2. Willing to have a go, with guidance and support
3. Trying to learn, needs lots of reminding and support
4. Doing well, benefits from reminding and support, progressing towards independence
5. Realistic and confident in their abilities, takes on new challenges and will move out of their comfort zone appropriately. As independent as their condition allows

Enjoyment

1. Reluctant to get on pony
2. Showing signs of enjoyment e.g. smiling, laughing, relaxing
3. Looks forward to sessions: keen to ride on arrival
4. Positive about own experience, people and ponies at sessions and when not at RDA
5. Riding is a favoured activity

Horsemanship

1. No knowledge of how to relate to or communicate with pony using riding aids
2. Shows understanding of how to relate to or communicate with pony using riding aids
3. Implementing communication with pony using riding aids when prompted
4. Implementing communication with pony using riding aids with little or no prompting
5. Riding with sensitivity to and control of pony

Physical changes

1. Able to stay placed in sitting position with assistance at leg from two side-helpers at walk
 2. Able to stay in balanced position at walk while supporting self, e.g. propping (leaning) on horse, saddle or thighs with no assistance from side-helper/s
 3. Able to sit independently at walk e.g. hands free or holding reins
 4. Able to ride independently at walk
 5. Able to stay in a balanced position independently at trot
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Relationships

1. Not interested in other people or ponies, no interaction
 2. Interested, wants contact with people and/or pony
 3. Responds well to contact from others, initiates contact with people and/or pony
 4. Takes others, including pony, into account, tries to cooperate
 5. Will encourage or help others, shows appreciation of help, enjoys relating
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