



From mountain to sea

# Accessibility Strategy



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## 1 Background

Aberdeenshire Council, along with the Scottish Government, is committed to ensuring that all our children and young people are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included. To support this, all of our children and young people should have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, ambition, confidence and self-esteem to their fullest potential. Aberdeenshire Council are guided by Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) principles.

This document sets out the Accessibility Strategy for schools managed by Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children's Services. It outlines the present and future developments to enhance and improve access to a quality education to all pupils.

This strategy recognises the rights of pupils with disabilities to appropriate education through improved access to information, curriculum and environment to ensure they are included, engaged and involved.

There is an ongoing duty incumbent on all to promote equality of opportunity and awareness of disabilities and additional support needs. Everyone should strive to create inclusive environments in which the needs of all pupils can be met and in which children and young people can flourish in a safe and nurturing environment. Inclusion is a national and a council priority.

### 1.1 Legislative Framework

The Accessibility Strategy is in place so that the planning and implementation processes of the local authority and education department meet the requirements of sections 1 to 3 of the **Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002**. The Act also requires that there are mechanisms in place for long-term strategic planning to improve access in schools for all pupils with disabilities.

The Accessibility Strategy will:

- improve access to education in mainstream schooling for present and prospective pupils with disabilities;
- improve visitor access to school buildings;
- Improve communication and consultation with and involvement of people with disabilities in the planning process
- Streamline departmental lines of communication with respect to issues relating to accessibility, disability and inclusion
- outline the planning, targets and expected outcomes over the next three years with regard to accessibility for pupils and staff across its education establishments
- assist with the authority's obligations to provide equality of employment to disabled staff under the Equality Act 2010 where schools' premises are used to provide services related to education

- assist with the education authorities obligation in meeting its general and specific duties under the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010

Under the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002, all local authorities must have plans in place for their pupils with disabilities to meet their duties under the legislation. The two key duties of this legislation are:

- not to treat disabled pupils less favourably
- to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage.

The Equality Act 2010 built on previous requirements by imposing on public bodies in carrying out their functions, a positive duty to eliminate discrimination and harassment, and, therefore, to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. In other words, it requires public bodies to move away from risk-avoidance activities to establishing practices which actively promote and support the diverse needs of disabled people. It requires information-gathering on the effect of policies and practices on educational opportunities and attainment levels of disabled pupils. It also requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments to make our service accessible to disabled people. These can be simple changes such as making sure that all lessons take place on ground floor classrooms for a class where one of the pupils uses a wheelchair and the school does not have a lift.

The general public sector equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The legislation covers people with different types of disabilities. A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

It includes the following broad groups of disabilities:

- Communication Difficulties,
- Hearing Impairments
- Specific Learning Difficulties, such as dyslexia
- Visual Impairments
- Specific Language Impairments
- Physical Difficulties / Motor Impairments
- Neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Autistic Spectrum Condition

It is important to note that the day-to-day activities affected by disability may include:

- Mobility
- Manual Dexterity
- Physical Coordination
- Continence
- Ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- Speech, Hearing or Eyesight
- Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Perception of Risk of physical danger
- Social interactions
- Participation in social activities

Schools and education authorities have had a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils since 2002 (originally under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) and, from October 2010, under the Equality Act 2010). From 1 September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for schools and education authorities includes a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. The duty is “to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the substantial disadvantage to a disabled person caused by a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of a school or by the absence of an auxiliary aid or service”. A school’s duty to make reasonable adjustments is an anticipatory one owed to disabled pupils generally, and therefore schools need to think in advance about what disabled pupils might require and what adjustments might need to be made for them.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments in relation to provisions, criteria and practices is not a new duty for schools. The new element of the duty for schools is the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils. This duty sits alongside the duty applied through the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils’ Educational Records) (Scotland) Act 2002 (‘the 2002 Act’) which requires responsible bodies to prepare and implement accessibility strategies to improve, year-on-year, access to education for disabled pupils.

Complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, as far as this is allowed by law. For example, it may involve making use of an exception or the positive action provisions in order to provide a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic.

The Equality Duty also explicitly recognises that the needs of disabled people may be different from those of non-disabled people. Public bodies should therefore take account of disabled people’s impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people differently to non-disabled people in order to meet their needs.

In addition, the Scottish Government introduced a set of specific equality duties in May 2012; the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, requiring public bodies to report on equality progress and activities.

## **1.2 The Accessibility Strategy**

The Equality Act 2010 reinforced and increased previous duties on all schools and Local Authorities to plan to increase over time the accessibility of schools with regard to disabled pupils and to implement their plans. Aberdeenshire Council's Accessibility Strategy focuses on three main areas which have been reviewed;

- Access to the curriculum
- Access to the physical environment, to enable better access to education and associated services provided; and
- Improving access to communication and the delivery of school information. In particular, relating to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats and taking account of any preferences expressed by the pupil or their parents, that would be provided in writing to pupils who do not have a disability

### **1.2.1 Who the Strategy covers**

This Accessibility Strategy covers pupils with a disability who require special arrangements to allow access to the curriculum, the physical environment or information. It is recognised that not all disabilities will give rise to additional support needs.

Pupils with learning difficulties, and / or social, emotional or behavioural needs may not meet a disability criteria, but may require significant additional support to access education. The Strategy therefore also includes pupils who require support to enable them to access education, regardless of whether they have a diagnosed condition or meet specific disability criteria.

The Strategy also covers prospective pupils with a disability. Aberdeenshire schools must be prepared to welcome pupils with a disability even when they are unaware at present of who these pupils might be.

## **2 Review of Accessibility Strategy and Planning for Period 2022-2024**

This is Aberdeenshire's fourth Accessibility Strategy which sets out progress to-date and plans for moving forward. A strategic review of Aberdeenshire's Additional Support Needs provision will be undertaken during the period of this strategy to continue to improve and develop access and support to services for children and young people. The review of the current Accessibility Design Brief, will be jointly undertaken by the Learning Estates and Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing Teams, taking into account the findings of the Additional Support Needs review. Our commitment to continual improvement remains a key priority of our vision, values and aims for Education and Children's Services.

### **2.1 Strategic Review of Additional Support Needs Provision**

Aberdeenshire Council's vision is that:

- All children and young people will receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time.
- Children and young people will be supported to remain with their families and be educated in their local communities.

The current Enhanced Provision Nine Area model provides a continuum of universal, targeted and specialist support across all schools in every area:

### **Mainstream provision with targeted support**

#### **Enhanced Provision Schools (18 Primary and 17 Secondary Schools)**

Some children have needs which affect their learning that require greater levels of support than that available within the mainstream classroom environment. They may require a more targeted curriculum which requires access to sensory rooms, targeted support with life skill development, and/or specialist approaches to learning and teaching. The resources to provide this level of support are referred to as 'enhanced provision' and comprise of teachers with a higher level of expertise than those supporting mainstream classes, and life skills/multi-sensory areas within a building – enhanced staffing and environment.

Children may access 'enhanced provision' according to their needs for as long or short a time as would be appropriate.

When a child/young person is attending a school which is not a designated enhanced provision, outreach support may be available from the nearest school with enhanced provision. This may take the form of direct support to the child/young person, or advice and consultation to teaching staff.

Alternatively, a blended placement may be offered between the mainstream school that a child/young person is attending and the nearest school with enhanced provision, in order that the child can remain with their peers in their own local school whilst also accessing the resources and expertise of the enhanced provision.

This degree of flexibility ensures that a child/young person's needs can be met fully under the GIRFEC principles (Getting it right for every child).

#### **Community Resource Hubs (5 Primary and 5 Secondary Schools, 4 Special Schools)**

A community resource hub supports pupils with significant and complex needs that cannot be met within the context of mainstream or enhanced provision. Many, but not all, children and young people being supported by Community Resource Hubs will be learning within the pre-early or early level of the Curriculum for Excellence. They are learners who require a specialist level of expertise and resource to access learning. The curriculum is based strongly on practical life skills, personal self-help skills, language and communication skills, self-regulation and sensory integration.



Community Resource Hub in-reach support may take the form of a full-time placement, a blended place with an enhanced provision school, or in exceptional circumstances, a short-term assessment place.

Outreach support may be offered in the form of direct intervention work with the child/young person, or advice and consultation to teaching staff.

Guidelines for staff on the management of Enhanced Provision and Community Resource Hubs were launched in 2015 and updated in November 2021.

Additional practitioner guidelines were developed to support child-centered planning of blended placements between mainstream / enhanced provision / community resource hub provisions. These can be found on the [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing website](#).

There is a current and projected increase in demand for local authority supports and services to meet additional support needs. During this period 2022-2024 a strategic review of the structures, systems and services which underpin Aberdeenshire's approach to meeting additional support needs is being undertaken to ensure that they align with the recommendations of the National ASN Review, and that they are responsive, flexible, equitable and future-fit.

As part of this Aberdeenshire ASN Review, consultation will take place with key stakeholders including Children and Young People, Parents/Carers, Education Staff and Multi-Agency Partners to review the Enhanced Provision Nine Area Model.

## **2.2 Peripatetic Support Services**

A range of peripatetic education support services provide consultation, advice and support to ensure that additional support needs are appropriately assessed and planned for.

### **2.2.1 Sensory Support Service**

Aberdeenshire Sensory Support Service is a peripatetic service staffed by:

- Teachers who have a mandatory specialist qualification that enables them to work with pupils who have a hearing or visual impairment.
- Communicators qualified and experienced in using either British Sign Language or Braille
- An Early Years Deaf Support Worker experienced in working with children who have a hearing impairment.

The Service works with babies, children and young people with a hearing or visual impairment.

The Service becomes involved following a referral by hospital specialists, a parent / carer, a school or partner agency. Ongoing involvement is provided, as appropriate, by reviewing levels of support annually. In some cases this can be until the pupil leaves school.

The Sensory Support Service provides support with the following:

- Assessment of a child's hearing or vision, with recommendations of how the child's needs can best be met
- Information, practical help and advice
- Support in the use of specialist resources to promote independence and access to the curriculum
- The development of language and communication skills
- Advice and support regarding inclusion
- Work in partnership with teachers in settings where pupils use Sign or Braille
- To teach Braille or Sign Language to identified pupils
- Organise mobility training / life skills for pupils with severe visual impairment
- Monitor a pupil's progress and provide reports and recommendations
- Contribute to planning meetings for pupils
- Provide guidance on physical adjustments and improving access to the school environment

## **2.2.2 ASPECTS**

ASPECTS is a service staffed by teachers who specialise in sourcing, developing and using assistive technology to support Aberdeenshire pupils additional support needs. The service aims to assist pupils whose curricular access needs cannot be met using standard school technology. ASPECTS can provide advice, training, software and hardware, as appropriate to the needs of the pupil.

## **2.2.3 Educational Psychology Service**

The Educational Psychology Service provides a service to children and young people from birth to post-school. Educational Psychologists provide advice and guidance, and support others to problem-solve their way through potentially difficult and complex situations, in which social, emotional, learning and/or mental or physical health factors are impacting on a young person's access to education.

## **2.2.4 English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service**

The EAL Service provides advice and support to children and young people for whom English is not their first language. The Service has a consultation, advice, training and teaching role. Referrals are made by schools at the stage at which the pupil is enrolled. The EAL Service then offers an initial

assessment to ascertain level of English and to determine the appropriate level of support required for the pupil to access education.

### **2.2.5. School Counselling Service**

Aberdeenshire School Counselling Service provides a safe and confidential space for young people to talk to a trained professional about issues and concerns they face. The counsellor will help the young person explore their thoughts, feelings and behaviours so they can develop a better understanding of themselves and of others.

A counsellor will not give young people their opinions or offer advice. They will help the young person find their own solutions – whether that's making effective changes in their life and relationships or finding ways of coping with their problems.

## **2.3 Professional Learning**

### **2.3.1 ASN Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) Strategy**

As part of the Aberdeenshire ASN Review, core professional learning recommendations on inclusion and meeting Additional Support Needs are being developed for the Education workforce.

### **2.3.2 Equality and Diversity Training**

All Aberdeenshire Council staff are expected to undertake two online training modules which promote positive attitudes to equality and diversity in the workplace, and help increase understanding of the challenges facing people from different groups.

## **3 Access to the Curriculum**

The primary responsibility for ensuring that children and young people with disabilities have equity of access to the curriculum lies with Aberdeenshire schools and services to ensure children and young people receive their entitlement and opportunities to extend their experiences and understanding in a range of contexts. This covers learning and teaching and the full breadth of the curriculum including after-school clubs, sports, leisure and cultural activities and school visits.

Adjustments that would help children and young people with additional support needs have better access to the curriculum might include:

- learning & teaching approaches
- classroom organisation
- timetabling
- peer support opportunities
- alternative assessment arrangements

A review of the Aberdeenshire Framework for supporting pupils with significant and complex needs will take place during academic year 2022/23.

### **3.1 Inclusive Education: The Universal Offer**

The presumption of mainstream lies at the heart of Aberdeenshire's ASN Review, with one of the key outcomes being clearly articulated expectations of Aberdeenshire's universal offer to children and young people.

There are defined expectations about whole school practices that are designed to support a particular population of young people, but in fact benefit most learners. This includes the following whole-school approaches:

- Dyslexia Friendly
- Autism friendly
- Restorative
- Solution-oriented
- Nurture
- Trauma informed
- Communication friendly
- Bilingual Friendly
- Whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing

A greater consistency and clarity of expectation for Aberdeenshire schools in regard to what these whole school approaches mean at operational level and how schools can access support, will be provided by:

1. The creation of expectations of minimum CLPL for all school staff as part of our universal offer to Aberdeenshire learners
2. Signposting to more targeted CLPL opportunities
3. The creation of a self-evaluation framework which enables schools to identify their own areas for development and for them to have one of the whole school approaches on their School Improvement Plan at any given time.

This commitment is underpinned by single- and multi-agency development of guidelines, practice innovations, and professional learning opportunities related to the following key areas.

#### **3.1.1 Dyslexia Friendly Schools**

Staff are encouraged and supported to use the "Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit", which is a free comprehensive online resource for all who are involved in the identification and support of learners aged 3-18 years who are showing signs of literacy difficulties.

An introduction to the Toolkit can be found on the "Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit" course on Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online

[\(ALDO\)](#). The course includes the documents listed below which can also be accessed via the [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing website](#).

- Guidelines to Support Literacy
- Whole School Dyslexia Reflective Tool
- Dyslexia in the Classroom Reflective Tool

Materials to support collaborative assessment when identifying dyslexia and further resources to support dyslexia friendly practices across Aberdeenshire schools are included in the course. All of these are currently under review and will be updated to ensure that they are fully fit for purpose.

### **3.1.2 Autism Friendly Schools**

The Aberdeenshire Autism strategy is currently under review. This review has involved partnership working across Education and Children’s Services, Health & Social Care Partnership, NHS Grampian and representation from the Third Sector and wider Stakeholders. An extensive consultation process is underway with all stakeholders and an action plan will be developed with the overall aim of improving outcomes for autistic people in order for them to feel respected, accepted and valued by their communities and have confidence in services to treat them fairly, so that they are able to have meaningful and satisfying lives (The Scottish Strategy for Autism 2011)

In Education, the Aberdeenshire Autism Professional Learning Framework is under development. This Framework maps out four different workforce skill level training requirements within Education, ranging from Level 1 which includes key messages for the broader workforce in schools, to Level 4 which involves deeper study and learning such as the completion of post graduate courses. Initially an online Universal training package will be made available to all staff to help them to understand and support autistic learners. Further training opportunities will be developed to support this Professional Learning Framework and an “Autism Self-Evaluation Tool for Schools” is being designed to support professional reflection on how well educational settings support autistic learners.

### **3.1.3 Further policy development**

During 2022 the following policies and guidance have been developed and implemented:

- “Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance in Educational Establishments Policy and Guidance, 2022”
- “Promoting Inclusion and Reducing Exclusions in Educational Establishments Policy and Guidance, 2022”
- “Relationships, Learning and Behaviour Interim Policy and Guidance, 2022”. This interim policy and guidance will be review and amended (where necessary), following the publication of the National Guidance

“Included, engaged and involved part 3: A relationship and rights based approach to physical intervention in Scottish schools”

The policies detailed above can be found on the Aberdeenshire [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing website](#)

## **3.2 Learning Pathway Plus**

A Learning Pathway Plus (LPP) is an individualised programme of learning which involves an increased range and/or level of service to support the delivery of an appropriate curriculum. A LPP represents a high level of curriculum flexibility which requires resources beyond those that would usually be available through the school, cluster or service. These services are therefore sourced locally and commissioned by Education and Children’s Services.

A LPP usually emerges from multi-agency assessment and action planning processes for those children and young people most at risk of disengagement, exclusion and going to an out-of-authority placement, out with their home community.

## **3.3 Digital Technology**

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that the implementation of technology and digital services has the ability to transform the way services are organised and delivered, and has a fundamental role to play in improving accessibility.

### **3.3.1 Assistive Technology**

Basic Digital Knowledge to support all learners continues to evolve. At present in Aberdeenshire it includes:

- Text to Speech
- Speech to Text
- Immersive Reader
- TextHelp
- Digital Books
- Digital Exams
- Device built-in Accessibility Settings
- Specialised Assistive Technology (i.e. Braille note taker, FM system).

### **3.3.2 Online Learning & Teaching**

#### **Interrupted Learners provision**

For the purposes of this provision, an interrupted learner is defined as a young person who meets the three criteria below:

- has been unable to engage with their local school for a minimum of three months
- has not responded positively to alternative strategies for a return to school (e.g. phased return/reduced timetable)
- has either
  - an education Child Plan (CP) or a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP)
  - a CP/CSP in development
  - involvement with Integrated Services

**OR** could be described as a young person:

- who has disengaged during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example due to physical or mental health issues

Interrupted Learners in Aberdeenshire are supported through the Northern Alliance's e-learning provision, e-Sgoil. This provision can be included as part of a package of support to provide a pathway back to the child or young person's own school through a collaborative approach.

Full information on all e-Sgoil provision can be found on the [e-Sgoil Website](#)

Aberdeenshire Education and Children's Services digital team, the LoveLearning Team, will have a four-stranded approach to digital technology over the course of the next 3 years: digital infrastructure, learning, teaching and assessment pedagogy, roll out of one to one devices and cyber safety/digital wellbeing. As part of the Scottish Government's commitment "to provide every school pupil in Scotland with a laptop or tablet," the four strands highlighted above will be a key focus for working with all stakeholders to deliver this ambitious programme.

### **3.4 Reasonable Adjustments / Special Exam Arrangements**

Special arrangements will be made to ensure that pupils with additional support needs have appropriate arrangements in place to enable them to demonstrate achievement and attainment. Aberdeenshire Council works closely with the Scottish Qualifications Authority to ensure that any reasonable adjustments / special arrangements are put in place for pupils. Whilst the term "special arrangements" is often referred to in the case of pupil examinations, it is recognised that these arrangements are in place across the whole of the curriculum to ensure equity and accessibility. Assessment and Planning advice is available from a range of Peripatetic Services.

### **3.5 Gypsy / Travellers**

Gypsy/Travellers are a recognised ethnic group. They consider the travelling lifestyle part of their ethnic identity and culture. Whilst it is difficult to give an exact figure of how many Gypsy/Travellers live in Aberdeenshire, a study has suggested there are 200 to 300 living in Aberdeenshire at any one time.

Aberdeenshire Council has a dedicated Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer, who, in addition to managing the Aikey Brae and Greenbanks sites, helps to provide support, information and advice to the Gypsy/Travellers community by signposting them to various services such as education and health.

The guidance to support learners from Gypsy/Traveller Communities was updated in 2020. This can be found on the Aberdeenshire [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing website](#)

## **4 Access to Physical Environment**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Suitability is a measure of whether a school is fit for the purpose of delivering the education curriculum and whether it is 'inclusive' and accessible. Aberdeenshire's Education and Children's Services Accessibility Design Brief will be jointly reviewed by the Learning Estates and Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing Teams, taking account of the findings of the Additional Support Needs review.

Due to the large and diverse nature of the Aberdeenshire school estate there are schools that will require improvement and updating over time, improving accessibility will be taken into consideration prior to any planned refurbishment works. Schools will be identified and prioritised for refurbishment based on:

- Known requirements for existing pupils
- Suitability Core Facts
- Planning for pupils within the cluster

The analysis of the accessibility facts will provide Aberdeenshire Council with robust information to ensure that there is a strategic approach to improving accessibility throughout the Learning Estate.

There will be some instances where improvements to a pupil's zoned school is not possible, an accessible alternative will be made available with suitable transport.

Improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which pupils with a disability are able to take advantage of education and associated services provided or offered by such school or schools is a priority for Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning**

The national learning estate strategy sets out ten guiding principles as below:



1. Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners
2. Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners
3. The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value
4. The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function
5. Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle
6. Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes and be digitally enabled
7. Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised
8. Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all
9. Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential
10. Investment in Scotland's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth

## **4.2 Existing Estate**

Within the existing estate, each cluster has both Enhanced Provision and Community Resource Hub provision available. The locations for this provision are detailed in Appendix 1.

## **4.3 New Buildings**

All new Primary and Secondary schools built in Aberdeenshire are fully accessible. The new build primary schools and extensions adhere to the Aberdeenshire new build primary school brief (2015). The supplementary documentation of access brief outlines appropriate adaptations to buildings. Equity and inclusion are at the heart of Aberdeenshire Council ethos, culture and practice, therefore barriers must not be created due to constraints of the building. New buildings will be accessible to all children including those with a non-physical disability.

All new schools must have the following accommodation:

- Low sensory stimulation area
- Multi-sensory spaces
- The facility to install hoists, if required in future
- Accessible toilets which are wide enough to allow two adult assistants with plinth and to be located with pupil toilets
- Shared spaces for nurture and small group working
- Break out spaces adjacent to classrooms

- Medical room
- Sufficient storage space for specialised equipment

All new Enhanced Provision and Integrated CRH will be delivered with an additional range of specific facilities and spaces to support the delivery of care and education. This would include provision for:

- Therapy
- Life Skills
- Dedicated, secure outdoor learning and play space

All new special schools (Standalone/Non-Integrated CRH) will be delivered with an additional range of specific facilities to support the delivery of care and education. These facilities would include:

- Low Sensory Integration Room
- Relaxation Sensory Room / Dark Room
- Rebound Therapy
- Therapy Room & Immersive Therapy
- Soft Play

#### **4.4 Strategy**

The following processes will identify and prioritise school buildings for access improvements

- Any changes to schools within the learning estates including reconfiguration, extensions and new builds will be fully accessible.
- Reactive to pupil needs identified through transitions or a through the Child's Plan process.
- Suitability Core Facts analysis will identify schools beyond those within the nine-area model are equipped with the appropriate building adaptations.

### **5 Improving Access to Communication and to the Delivery of School Information**

#### **5.1 Parental Involvement and Engagement**

Both globally and nationally it is recognised that parents are the single most important influence on their children's development, learning and achievement. The involvement and engagement of parents in their children's learning is recognised as a key element in raising attainment through support, help and encouragement given at home and while at school.

The Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan demonstrates the commitment by Aberdeenshire Council to improve the quality and the extent of all parents' involvement in their child's learning and the important role they play in their child's education. The Action Plan sets out a vision for parental involvement and engagement for the next three years and covers a journey that a child takes

from pre-birth to age 18. It highlights the leadership of those who make the difference day in and day out. This strategy and action plan is currently under review.

The Action Plan is published on the [Aberdeenshire Council website](#)

### **5.1.1 Methods of communication**

Communication with parents/carers may take place through a variety of channels. Aberdeenshire Schools are prepared to contact parents and carers by the most effective way to make the information accessible. This may mean the use of a textphone, Typetalk, mobile phone or email for deaf or hard of hearing parents, or the use of a tape or email for those with visual difficulties or dyslexia.

Parents/Carers must be consulted at time of enrolment to ensure that the format of information which is sent home is accessible to them. Where specialist support and information is required, this too must be presented in alternative formats where necessary to ensure accessibility and help understanding.

### **5.1.2 Parental Involvement in Assessment & Planning Processes**

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to providing the right support, in the right place, and at the right time in order to help individual children and young people achieve their potential and goals. Aberdeenshire Council works with children, young people, parents and carers, and a range of multi-agency partners, using the GIRFEC National Practice Model.

Parents/carers should be encouraged to be routinely involved in reviewing their child's additional support needs. It is recognised that attending meetings can be a nerve-racking experience for families. Aberdeenshire multi-agency operational guidance on effective Child's Plan meetings provide prompts for before, during and after a meeting to help ensure everyone feels welcome to join in discussion at meetings, leading to the best chance of a positive outcome and shared sense of ownership towards the Child's Plan. Multi-agency training is also available to practitioners on effective Child's Planning meetings.

### **5.1.3 Addressing Concerns and Complaints**

Parents/carers are encouraged to approach school management if there are aspects of accessibility they have concerns about so that strategies can be considered and put in place.

Concerns are almost always most quickly and easily addressed informally through discussion between parents/carers and those most directly involved with their child. Initially parents/carers should be advised to discuss concerns

with the class teacher, principal teacher, depute headteacher or headteacher dependent on age and stage.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the vital role that parents play in supporting their child's learning and is committed to fostering positive relationships with parents. No matter how strong partnerships are, or how good our policies are, sometimes things can still go wrong and there may be occasions where parents wish to express unhappiness or dissatisfaction with council services, policies or staff behaviour.

The complaints procedure is available on the [Aberdeenshire Council website](#)

#### **5.1.4 Dispute Resolution**

Further information about Resolving Disputes and the Rights of Parents can be found on the ENQUIRE Parent Information Service: [Enquire](#)

### **5.2 Voice of the Child or Young Person**

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 included new law which helps make sure children's rights are promoted across Scotland.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to supporting children and young people's involvement in discussing what support could help them. Children and young people should be given the option to meaningfully participate in their assessment and planning meetings. The opportunity to bring a support person along to single- or multi-agency planning meetings (e.g. a helpful family member or a trusted Pupil Support Assistant) should be offered. In some less common circumstances, advocacy entitlement or legal representation may be appropriate to arrange for the child or young person.

If the child or young person does not wish to be physically present at a meeting, they should be supported to express their views, so these can be taken into account. Views can be represented at meetings in a number of ways, such as drawings, writing them down in advance, recording video clips, or discussing what they would like to happen with someone they trust in order that they can advocate on their behalf. Tools such as the "Have your say" form and "My Voice" software can also be used.

"My Voice" is a unique consulting platform for engaging with and gathering the views of children and young people who use social work services in Aberdeenshire. In 2015 the Children's Services team involved young people and practitioners in the design of the system from inception and development, through to delivery. The resulting platform and solution, My Voice - Together Aberdeenshire, is now 'tried, tested and well received' by service users and service providers.

Based on the 8 Wellbeing Indicators, My Voice software uses widget symbols and audio to support children with a disability to answer survey questions and express their views. Over 2017 this approach was further piloted, and has now been rolled out across Aberdeenshire. All schools are expected to use My Voice, to strengthen

the voice of disabled children and young people within any assessment or Child's Plan.

An online toolkit will be developed with a continuum of methodologies that support the views of children and young people with different levels and types of additional support needs to be incorporated into single- and multi-agency assessment and planning processes.

### **5.3 Total Communication Approach**

In 2015 the Aberdeenshire Total Communication Approach was developed in partnership with allied health professionals from NHS Grampian Speech & Language Therapy Team. As part of the ASN Review, this policy is currently under review to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

The current Total Communication Approach emphasises the importance of using any means of communicating. Children with speech and language difficulties or more complex needs may require support to initiate and participate in communication and interaction. This means making use of all the means of communication that are available to the children. This may include;

- Speech and spoken language
- Makaton signing
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Photos
- Picture symbols
- Pictures
- Objects
- Voice output communication aids and computer based systems
- On body signing
- Natural gesture

The Total Communication Approach involves the use of WIDGIT symbols in all Aberdeenshire schools and the use of Makaton as the preferred method of sign communication. However, children and young people for whom a severe / profound hearing loss is their main difficulty and they have no other significant support need, then BSL would be the preferred method of communication. Training in the use of Makaton or BSL is delivered to Aberdeenshire school staff on a needs-led basis. Makaton training for parents is available via NHS Grampian Speech and Language Therapy.

The current policy which is under review can be found on the Aberdeenshire [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing website](#)

### **5.4 Hearing and Vision Support**

The Sensory Support Service provides advice and guidance to schools and families on access to the curriculum.

Pupils who are visually impaired may require specialised equipment in order to access the curriculum. They may also require their curriculum to be adapted ie large print, braille and or audio. The Sensory Support Service information booklet is also available in alternative formats.

The vision support service also works with Aberdeenshire Council Mobility Officers who provide support and advice regarding the physical access to buildings ie highlighting of steps and modifications to buildings such as lighting or highlighting. Provision may also be made for orientation sessions to familiarise VI pupils with the school environment. This can be done by providing plans of the school layout and 1-1 visits.

For hearing impaired pupils, access is supported by the use of radio aids, portable sound field systems or, where available, induction loop systems. A service information booklet is available in BSL and is available if required.

## **5.5 English as an Additional Language (EAL)**

As Aberdeenshire increasingly welcomes families where English is an additional language to its communities, there is a requirement to ensure that language is not a barrier to children and their families. There also needs to be awareness that families may have different experiences of education, and so it cannot be assumed that they will know about the curriculum or expectations of school routines, homework, holidays, lunches, free school meals, parental engagement, uniforms, charity days and any other concepts which may be different or not present in other education systems. .

A range of generic materials have been produced in a variety of languages to support learning and home-school communication. Primary school menus and guidance on payment for meals and entitlement to free school meals is available in some languages on the council website. Access to translation and interpretation services is arranged through the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service. Information on the Scottish education system and parents as partners is also available in some languages.

In 2017, [guidance](#) was refreshed to support schools to settle in bilingual children and young people. This includes tips on involving and communicating with parents, and useful learning & teaching strategies to support social inclusion, learning, communication, and the acquisition of English. The EAL Service offers online training modules and a range of training courses for Nursery, Primary and Secondary staff. These courses can be arranged by contacting the EAL Service and can be booked through ALDO.

Aberdeenshire now has significant experience of supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers through resettlement. Factors to consider include whether the child/young person has experience of trauma, interrupted schooling or lack of first language literacy. An EAL teacher has a dedicated remit to support enrolment and the initial period of settling into school for children and young people who are Refugees or seeking asylum. This role does not extend to arrivals from Ukraine due to the scale

of arrivals. However, through temporary additional EAL teaching time dedicated to support Ukrainian arrivals, the EAL team offer timely support to follow up new arrivals from Ukraine, the majority of whom require support. Schools are supported through resources, advice and sharing of good practice on the “Ukraine Resources for Schools” Microsoft Team.

The EAL Service is currently developing a “Culturally Responsive Schools” Toolkit, which aims to offer a suite of case studies, advice and resources for school staff and examples of good practice.

## **5.6 Web resources**

### **5.6.1 ASN Website**

To ensure Aberdeenshire Council meets the needs of all of our children and young people in inclusive schools and communities, the Aberdeenshire Council website for Additional Support Needs [ASN, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing](#), provides information and policies and guidance, on a range of additional support needs for children and young people, parents, and professionals.

### **5.6.2 GIRFEC Website**

Multi-agency policies, procedures and guidance to support practitioners with the implementation of the GIRFEC Approach, and information on GIRFEC for children and young people, and parents / carers, is available on the Aberdeenshire [GIRFEC](#) website.

## Appendix 1 – Enhanced Provision Model – List of Schools

Network	Enhanced Provision Schools		Community Resource Hub	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Aboyne	Aboyne Primary School	Aboyne Academy	Aboyne Primary School	Aboyne Academy
Banchory	Banchory Primary School	Banchory Academy		
Alford	Alford Community Campus	Alford Community Campus	Alford Community Campus	Alford Community Campus
Banff	Banff Primary School	Banff Academy	Banff Primary School	Banff Academy
Ellon	Ellon Primary School	Ellon Community Campus	Ellon Primary School	Ellon Community Campus
Meldrum	Meldrum Primary School	Meldrum Academy		
Turriff	Turriff Primary School	Turriff Academy		
Fraserburgh	Fraserburgh North School Sandhaven School	Fraserburgh Academy	Westfield School, Fraserburgh	Westfield School, Fraserburgh
Huntly	Gordon Primary School	The Gordon Schools	Gordon Primary School	The Gordon Schools
Inverurie	Strathburn School	Inverurie Academy	St Andrews School, Inverurie	St Andrews School, Inverurie
Kemnay	Kintore Primary School	Kemnay Academy		
Westhill	Crombie School	Westhill Academy		
Laurencekirk	Laurencekirk School	Mearns Academy	Carronhill School, Stonehaven	Carronhill School, Stonehaven
Stonehaven	Mill O'Forest School	Mackie Academy		
Portlethen	Portlethen Primary School	Portlethen Academy		
Mintlaw	Mintlaw Primary School	Mintlaw Academy	Anna Ritchie School, Peterhead	Anna Ritchie School, Peterhead
Peterhead	Dales Park School	Peterhead Academy		