

## **SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **SCHOOL ACCESS INITIATIVE (SAI) POLICY – REVISION March 2018**

**Document Title**      School Access Initiative – Policy Update  
**Service Group:**      SEND / Vulnerable Learners  
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#### **SCHOOL ACCESS INITIATIVE POLICY**

School Access Initiative funding is allocated by Somerset County Council to support Somerset's mainstream schools carry out the 'reasonable adjustments' required to make them accessible for disabled pupils and those with complex medical conditions.

The funding and the work it enables, supports the Local Authority and mainstream schools within Somerset to meet their duties in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

# SCHOOL ACCESS INITIATIVE POLICY

## A. Introduction

The purpose of the School Access Initiative (SAI) is to improve the accessibility of Somerset's mainstream schools for pupils, in years reception to 11, from Somerset, with a physical, visual or hearing impairment, complex medical needs or autism.

In Somerset, we have secured a modest amount of capital funding each year to deliver a SAI works programme.

*School Access Initiative enables Somerset County Council, in partnership with mainstream schools and other services to:*

- *Meet the duties of the Equality Act 2010 and Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014*
- *Develop the accessibility of mainstream schools in Somerset to reasonably meet the needs of pupils with a disability and / or impairment*

The capital allocation for 2017/18 was £450,000.

## B. Legislation and Finance

### Legislation

The Equality Act (2010) requires schools to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act (2010)
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

The Children and Families Act (2014), through the SEND Code of Practice (2015) reinforces the duty on schools to make reasonable adjustments:

*“All schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 towards individual disabled children and young people. They must make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children, to prevent them being put at a substantial disadvantage. These duties are anticipatory – they require thought to be given in advance to what disabled children and young people might require and what adjustments might need to be made to prevent that disadvantage. Schools also have wider duties to prevent discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.”*

### Finance

Although the Local Authority sets aside a modest annual budget to support Local Authority Maintained Community schools and Voluntary Controlled

schools to make reasonable adjustments, it is expected that schools will contribute funds to any capital project by allocating an element of their capital funds.

Capital funding provided to schools is for the purpose of addressing the priority capital needs of their premises. This can be new buildings, repairs and enhancements, ICT, structural remodelling and adaptations for pupils and staff with disability.

All adaptations and new buildings should ensure accessibility for the wider community for whom the site is potentially available, including disabled users.

It is essential that schools do not neglect their buildings, but consider and set aside funds to deal with all long-term premises and infrastructure needs.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Local Authority will not fund any reasonable adjustments where the accessibility issues have arisen through a lack of maintenance on the part of the school.

The Local Authority will also consider funding reasonable adjustments in Academies where the pupil in question has an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) and it is their nearest qualifying or catchment school.

Voluntary Aided schools will need to apply for funding from the Locally Controlled Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP) or its future equivalent.

No installation or adaptation supported through this policy should be further adapted or removed without the prior agreement with the Local Authority through the CIP process as this represents a capital asset for immediate and **future** benefit.

### **C. Identification of need**

In Somerset, Multi-Agency Support and Intervention in the Early Years (MAISEY) meetings have been introduced to support the early identification of school placements for those pupils who will need a physically accessible environment to meet their needs.

Advice to support schools that are planning for prospective pupils, who may require physical adaptations, can be requested from the Physical Impairment and Medical Support (PIMS) Team, teams specialising in Hearing or Visual Impairments or the Autism & Communication Service.

In some cases, it will be difficult to deliver reasonable adjustments due the nature of the school site or prohibitive cost of any proposed works. Where this is the case, professionals may recommend that the child is placed at an alternative local school which is considered to be able to meet the child's needs.

Most schools' over-subscription criteria will place a high priority on children who have additional needs, including physical impairments and medical issues, but who do not have an EHCP.

## **D. Strategic Priorities**

As the available funding to deliver reasonable adjustments is limited, the Local Authority has developed a number of strategic priorities that will inform its deployment of resources:

- To improve access to the local school to facilitate inclusion for a named pupil, where this is a reasonable investment and an alternative accessible local school cannot be identified
- To develop at least one accessible route through the primary and secondary education phases in each of Somerset's learning communities
- To address wider accessibility issues in schools when carrying out reasonable adjustments for the needs of specific children

## **E. Acceptance, delivery and future maintenance of reasonable adjustments**

Any referral to the SAI Panel should be made by the school, using the appropriate form (see Appendix A) in consultation with an appropriate specialist advisory teacher. This will usually trigger an initial visit so a site review can be completed.

Alternatively the Local Authority or appropriate support service may initiate contact with a school where it is known or anticipated that a pupil will require a building adaptation. A referral form will still be required.

Due regard must be given to the probable lead-in time for any proposed building projects.

All applications for the use of SAI funds will be considered on an individual basis by a designated panel under the following criteria:

- Whether the school is the child's catchment or nearest qualifying school
- Evidence of individual need which requires reasonable adjustment
- Proximity of alternative accessible schools
- Whether the cost / impact of any adjustments would be viewed as effective use of public resources
- Overall feasibility of any proposed works

Acceptance of a referral does not constitute a commitment to delivery or funding. A site visit and report from a property specialist will provide advice on the level, cost and feasibility of any works to the SAI Panel. The SAI Panel will then make a decision on the viability of the proposed works identified by the site visit.

If a project meets all of the criteria listed above and is considered deliverable, the school will be contacted in order to discuss funding options, prior to the any works being commissioned.

The Local Authority will, in liaison with the school, oversee any works but the school will be responsible for any future maintenance, repair or training related to the reasonable adjustments that are delivered.

## **F. Governance**

The membership of the SAI Panel will be made up of the following:

- Service Manager – Schools Commissioning (Chair)
- Project Manager – Corporate Property
- Projects & Finance Officer – Corporate Property
- Team Leader – Vision and Physical Impairment & Medical Support Teams
- Team Leader – Hearing Support Team
- Team Leader – Autism & Communication Service (where required)

The SAI Panel will meet every 6 weeks to consider referrals for reasonable adjustments and monitor progress of commissioned works (using the process set out in Appendix B).

Decisions relating to referrals will be communicated back to the school / advisory teacher in writing, with a clear rationale for the decision.

The SAI Panel will also consider applications from Advisory Teachers for specialist equipment to support the individual needs of disabled pupils (school years 0-11) in mainstream schools.

These applications will typically be approved where the cost for such equipment is high and cannot reasonably be met through funding allocated to schools.

This equipment will be loaned to schools, supported through agreements with Support Services for Education.

There will also be the option for access technology equipment to follow a child to their Post-16 provision, as a result of a financial transaction between the Local Authority and the Provider.

The transaction will be determined by a calculation of the equipment's 5-year, straight-line depreciating value.

The Provider will have to make their own arrangements to service the equipment at recommended intervals.

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## Appendix A – SAI Referral Form

### SAI Referral Form

Advisory Teacher's name:

Date of completion:

School name:

School status:

Area:

Academy: Yes / No / Converting

Headteacher:

Community / Foundation / VA / VC

Pupil's name:

Pupil's address:

Does the pupil have an EHCP?

DOB:

Yes / No / In process

What are the pupil's needs:

What reasonable adjustments are proposed:

How will the reasonable adjustments support the pupil:

When is the work required (pupil's start date):

What consultation has taken place to date (parents / school / occupational therapist etc):

Key issues in relation to proposed reasonable adjustments:

Attachments required:

Supporting letter from Headteacher: Attached? Yes / No

Site visit report: Attached? Yes / No

**School Access Initiative (SAI) Referral Process**

