

# MORE HOUSE SCHOOL

## POLICY

### DISABILITY

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#### **Rationale:**

More House School exists to educate boys with specific learning difficulties. Admission to the school depends upon a prospective pupil meeting the criteria required to enable the school to maintain and, if possible to improve, the educational and general standards for all its pupils commensurate with the ethos to which the school aspires. It is therefore of importance that the school feels reasonably sure that it has the correct skill sets to be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his potential. This policy is in place so as to ensure that every pupil, with or without disability, has the chance of completing a happy and successful school career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. This 'Disability Policy' has taken reference from the Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010 (Disability).

#### **Purpose:**

- To apply these criteria to all pupils and potential pupils regardless of any disability of which it is aware.
- To apply the School's obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared to any pupil who is not disadvantaged because of his disability.
- To plan for parents and visitors to the School who also might be wheel chair users.

#### **Broad Guidelines:**

In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the school may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards as appropriate. Subject to this, the school will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality. One of the obvious problems which the school has is its layout which covers a wide area and is located on the side of a hill overlooking the Surrey countryside. Although many classrooms are single-storied buildings, hill gradients to certain of these teaching areas, constitutes a risk to wheelchair users.

The boarding facilities pose similar problems. It is not hard to conclude that any pupil with impaired mobility is going to be put at a disadvantage by these problems, if not prohibited altogether from access to some educational and other facilities the school offers. Nor can these matters be remedied in any substantial way by reasonable adjustments short of making major alterations to physical features of the school at prohibitive cost. Even the fruition of long-term plans can only go some way to ameliorate the position.

A review of the school's disability policy was undertaken by the Board of Governors. The Governors terms of reference are:

- (i) to review the school's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect pupils and prospective pupils who are disabled;
- (ii) to make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in its many aspects to pupils or prospective pupils with disabilities by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future and to prepare this Disability Policy;

- (iii) to review the school's Disability Policy;
- (iv) to review the school's Accessibility Plan;
- (v) to review such other plans and policies, in particular its Equal Opportunities policy on an annual basis.

The following areas have been considered in detail by the Governors with the results set out below:

### **Admissions**

1. The Governors have reviewed the school's admissions literature, policy, and procedures. Admissions to the school are determined by the school's skill set in being able to make a difference. Procedures are based on a carefully designed screening process that enables a child's needs to be measured against the school's expertise. The adherence to the school's Admissions policy and procedures should therefore safeguard against discriminatory practice and should also ensure a fair admissions resolution for all students.
2. An assessment of the Human Rights Act 1998 was undertaken. Articles 5,6,7,8,9,10 and 13 were considered to give greater impact and relevance to the life of More House School and its students. The philosophy within these articles was then compared with the school's policies on such issues as Religion, Equal Opportunities, Disability Planning and the Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Practices, Data Protection and Health & Safety & Family Friendly policies. The review concluded that none of these policies promoted unfairness or discriminatory practice and all policies harboured an element of the respect for Human Rights. A recent review has also arrived at this conclusion.
3. As a consequence of this review to ensure fairness in all practices, a means test has been introduced to enable consistent and fair assessments of parents that unexpectedly fall into financial difficulties and apply for reduced fees.
4. The Form of Entry, associated medical forms, and other reports will continue to be used to assess the requirements and differing needs of students with forms of disability.

### **Physical lay-out of the School and its boarding facilities**

The Governors have considered these areas and identified the following problems:

1. The school's location on a particularly steep slope, is not conducive to wheelchair users. From time to time More House has been visited by people in wheelchairs, and at these times the practicalities of wheelchair safety has made those in attendance particularly aware to the shortfalls on site for the disabled.
2. The alteration from shingle paths to hard-surfaced paths and driveways, such as tarmac has improved wheelchair mobility around the school. At present, wheel chair users that visit the school are accompanied at all times by a member of staff who ensure safe mobility around the site. Nevertheless, any changes to the surface of the paths and drives would not negate the problem with the siting of the school and the huge problems that are presented due to the steepness of the sloping school site, not only for wheelchair users but also those with other mobility problems.

3. New buildings have been constructed in compliance with Document M of the Building Regulations 1991 and as amended in 2010 and 2013. This document details standards of access and facilities for disabled people. However, it was recognised that existing buildings would benefit from the replacement of steps to ramps to increase ease of mobility and this change is already being implemented where possible. New steps have been formed from the Cloister's terrace to the area known as St. Vincents which will help the partially sighted. Unfortunately due to the land available, a ramp connecting these two areas was not feasible. The ramp down to the junior school (Gard'ner House) which was previously identified as presenting a problem to persons in wheelchairs has recently been changed and although now includes a few steps, the steps are wide enough for wheelchair users to stop and transverse the walkway with greater ease and safety.
4. Some parents and visitors to the School are also likely to be wheel chair users and need to access parent evenings/classrooms. Parent evenings are usually held either on the ground floor of buildings or in a building such as our Bradbury Heights, Bradbury School of Engineering, or Bradbury School of Music that all have lifts and easy vehicular access up to the building.
5. The Governors decided that in the long term, the school strategy should be to continually improve disabled access whenever and wherever possible, so as to correct the access difficulties that a disabled person with mobility problems may find problematic.

## **Education**

The Governors have considered:

1. The problems of physical access and movement within classrooms.

Many classrooms are accessible to the disabled. The junior school (Gard'ner House) is fully accessible to students with physical mobility problems. Most science laboratories and art rooms are also accessible to wheelchair users. The Learning Development Centre (LDC) however is not accessible, being on a second floor, although it is often the case that Speech & Language Therapists deliver support to students in the classroom setting, and this would most likely be the case for a wheelchair user. These accessibility issues would also apply to any partially sighted and deaf students that may join the school in the future.

2. The difficulties of "access" to the education generally for specified types of disability.

Once it was agreed to admit a student to the school, the Governors believed that an appropriate curriculum could be provided to the student in line with his needs and as agreed between the student, parent, (LEA), school and the mandatory requirements of the National Curriculum. Specific resources would be assessed and determined by the student's Statement of Educational Need and implemented as part of the disabled student's Individual Education Plan. Access to the full curriculum, for example, Science would need to be risk assessed regarding the use of equipment and other resources in light of safety considerations.

## **Recreational Activities**

The Governors has also considered:

1. The difficulties of “access” to the particular activities for specified types of disability:

The Governors again found this difficult to assess as access to certain activities would be determinant on the restriction of movement and desire of each individual student. The Governors therefore reserved the right to offer recommendations on this issue, but left it in the hands of the Headmaster to respond as appropriate within the boundaries of what was risk assessed as safe to the student and that which would not be detrimental to the safety of others.

## **Sporting Education and Activities**

The Governors has considered:

1. The difficulties of “access” to sporting education generally for specified types of disability:
2. The school offers a wide choice of sporting activities and the choice has been broadened in recent years with the addition of the sports hall. This centre is fully accessible to disabled persons and the sports hall floor covering within the building would not unduly suffer from the use of a wheelchair.
3. Activities such as swimming, archery, cadets, volley ball, basketball, english, science, ICT, maths, board games, internet, music practice, drama, cadets, gardening, woodwork, art, table tennis and pottery are all activities that persons that are disabled can have access to and enjoy.
4. Other activities such as touch rugby, football and running are examples of activities that would not be conducive to participation in the activity but could include ‘a helping participatory role’ if the student so wished. The Governors again were brought back to the philosophy of meeting each child’s needs and their desire for inclusion.

## **Welfare**

The Governors have considered that:

1. Difficulties which might arise for specified types of disability with regards to bullying, non-integration, physical and mental welfare and health.

More House has a clearly defined approach when dealing with issues of bullying. The school are constantly vigilant to ensure that everyone in the school has an awareness of and sensitivity to bullying. The school will take decisive measures to support the victim and reform the perpetrator when behaviour has intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person, or group of people. The school’s policy on bullying also clearly deals with the issues of non-integration, physical and mental welfare and health regarding this issue.

The Governors concluded that sufficient controls were in place to prevent bullying being an issue at More House.

2. The school believes in close links with parents. A student's housemaster/mistress or the Head/Deputy Head of Boarding are always available to discuss any residential concerns that boarding parents may have. Likewise, a boy's Form Tutor will also be happy to discuss any academic concerns. The Headmaster or his Deputies are available by telephone or, by appointment for a personal interview. If a parent is not satisfied with the response of the Headmaster, a parent may ask him to take the matter to the Chairman of Governors. Parents may also ring the Social Services Inspection & Registration Unit. Under the Children Act, the Principal Deputy Head and Deputy Head (Boarding) are the designated persons for Child Protection and the school has two Independent Visitors who can also be contacted by telephone. These telephone number are available from notices in the boarding area but can also be obtained from the school office. The Governors concluded that existing controls were sufficient to safeguard against bullying behaviour.

### **Awareness and Observance of the Policy**

1. The Governors have considered the existing machinery in the school for ensuring awareness and observance of the policy:

Awareness and the observance of the school's disability policy and planning is controlled by the school's admission policy. Adherence to the policy is driven through clearly documented procedures, training and compliance to Document M of the Building Regulations for all new buildings and alterations to the existing fabric and grounds of the school. Delivery of the full educational curriculum will be in accordance with the wishes of the parent, child, school and the mandatory requirements of the National Curriculum. The inclusion of activities will be dependent on the restriction of movement and assessed for each child. The inclusion in other leisure/hazardous activities will be assessed as to the restriction of movement, compared with the requirements of the activity and the capability of staff to ensure safety. Controls and procedures are in place for the prevention of bullying

### **Conclusion:**

The Governors conclude from their review of non-discrimination and disability planning, that the school, although being able to improve its provision for wheel chaired users, by installing ramps and hard tarmac surfaces to paths and driveways, it cannot comply in its entirety to the 'Act' due to the physical steepness of the sloping hillside that is the acreage of More House School.

The school are confident that once a student is admitted to the school a realistic curriculum can be offered. Space within the classrooms is somewhat of an issue, as classrooms have been designed to accommodate only small classes in line with its specialism and reputation. Wheelchairs within some of these classrooms therefore would be restrictive. The inclusion of other disabilities such as blindness or deafness is considered unsuitable as no staff employed at the school are specialised to deal with the needs of these categories of students and there are other schools where their skill sets are more appropriate to the students' needs.

**L A ROBERTS**  
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