

TORQUAY BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009
(Reviewed Feb 2008)

Welcome to Torquay Boys' Grammar School's Disability Equality Scheme.

Definition of Disability

A disabled person (child or adult) is someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- A physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments; impairments relating to mental functioning, including learning disabilities; and long term health conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis.
- Substantial means more than minor or trivial.
- Long-term means an impairment that has lasted at least 12 months, or is likely to last 12 months or for the rest of the person's life.
- Normal day-to-day activities cover the following categories: 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 the risk of physical danger.

Someone with an impairment may be receiving medical or other treatment which alleviates or removes the effects of that impairment (but not the impairment itself). In such cases the treatment should be disregarded and the impairment is taken to have the effect it would have had without the treatment. Some people are automatically deemed to have a disability covered by the Act – those with HIV, cancer, MS, and severe disfigurements. There are special provisions for people with progressive or recurring conditions.

1. Executive Summary

TBGS is committed to equal opportunities and diversity: these are part of the core values of the institution. We aim to be an inclusive organisation where everyone has a fair opportunity to fulfil his/her potential.

The Scheme recognises that we have a long history of supporting students and staff with disabilities and the actions we have taken over the years to make our estate, courses, policies and procedures as accessible as possible. However, we know that we still have work to do and welcome the new statutory duties which the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places on us, particularly in promoting disability equality.

Our Scheme is set within the social model of disability. It will play an important part in influencing our Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategies, our Widening Participation Strategy and our Human Resources Strategy.

In drawing up the Scheme we have involved disabled staff and students in addition to external partners. Through their involvement we have identified areas for improvement which have helped us to prioritise our key actions.

Finally, our Action Plan sets out what we aim to achieve over the lifetime of the Scheme and how we will do so. Our approach to monitoring the Action Plan is also set out.

We welcome feedback from individuals, within and outside the institution and look forward to working with them to achieve our goals.

2. Our commitments

We have a long tradition at TBGS offering secondary education to students selected on academic ability.

We actively celebrate diversity and wish to ensure a student and staff population which is a rich blend of social and ethnic backgrounds, abilities and nationalities and will continue to be at the forefront of equitable practices for staff, students and customers.

3. Introduction

The purpose of the scheme is to:

- Show how we have engaged and how we will continue to engage with disabled people in our planning and decision making processes
- Show that, in working together, we have identified the needs of disabled people and that those needs are properly prioritised for action
- Ensure that members of the School community understand their responsibilities and take these responsibilities seriously
- Explain how we will aim to make things fairer for disabled people in all that we do
- Demonstrate that we are fulfilling our legal duties
- Show how we are working with disabled people and representative organisations in our wider community to ensure we are communicating effectively with disabled people and that the needs of disabled people are fully considered in all our functions
- Tell people what we are doing to check and monitor our progress.

4. The Steering Group

To demonstrate the School's commitment to disabled people, we have formed a Disability Equality Scheme Steering Group. The group is chaired by a member of the SMT, the membership is as follows:

- 1 from SMT (Chair)
- 1 Governor
- 1 Parent
- 1 Teacher
- 1 Support Staff
- 2 Students

At least two of this group are also disabled people and they have had active involvement in the planning and production of the plan. This active involvement has focused the group on the specific issues faced by disabled students and staff within the School and we believe this is reflected in our Action Plan.

5. The Context

Approximately 11 million adults in the United Kingdom are disabled. This is around 20% of the population.

Evidence shows that disabled people are likely to do less well in life than non-disabled people. This is particularly evident in the areas of education, and sets the context for the challenges the School faces in dealing with disability equality.

We will ask our staff and pupils to inform us of any disability issues they may have. We know that there are many more who choose not to tell us for a variety of reasons, including:

- Fear of prejudice or stigmatisation
- They feel that there is no particular need to disclose as they require little or no support
- They do not recognise their impairments as a disability
- They believe that they can do well without the need to disclose.

This list is not exhaustive and we recognise that individuals have their own reasons for not disclosing. However, we do recognise that we should encourage disclosure across the whole of our community in order that we can better anticipate and respond to the needs of disabled people.

6. What the Law says - The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005)

The DDA 2005 defines TBGS as a public authority. This means that we have legal duties to which we must adhere. These are divided into general and specific duties and are explained below.

a) General Duty

When carrying out our functions we need to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even when that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

As can be seen, the overarching goal of this duty is to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. We recognise that we need to be proactive in order to meet and better our duties towards disabled people and this is reflected in our action plan contained within this scheme.

b) The Social Model of Disability

We also recognise that the DDA 2005 is written in the context of the Social Model of Disability and that our actions are about removing the barriers that disable people in society. To achieve this, we need to build the involvement of disabled people into all of our core functions and we need to evidence this. Furthermore, we recognise that we need to review and develop this involvement as we move our diversity, equality and inclusion agendas forward.

c) Specific Duties

This Disability Equality Scheme arises from our specific duties under the DDA 2005. The specific requirements are:

- We publish a Disability Equality Scheme that demonstrates how we intend to fulfil our general and specific duties
- We involve disabled people in the development of the scheme and state how that involvement has occurred
- We lay out our methods for impact assessment

- We produce an action plan that demonstrates the steps we will take towards fulfilling our duties
- We state our arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment and our delivery of education; we state our arrangements for putting this information to good use.

In addition, we must provide evidence in a report that we have taken the steps we have laid out in our action plan within three years of the publication of the Scheme (unless they prove to be unreasonable or impractical).

7. Where are we now?

TBGS is committed to disability equality and to improving all that we do with disabled people.

In preparing our first Disability Equality Scheme we are building on firm foundations.

- We have an extensive network of friends in the community and regularly call on their expertise to support our students and staff.
- Our Senior Management Team has audited the provision for accessibility and has developed a programme of works that will provide major improvements to accessibility of the school site.

We are not complacent, however, and understand there is still much work to be done in ensuring our commitment to disability equality is fully realised.

8. Gathering and Using Data

The Steering Group recognises at the outset of its work that regular and reliable data is essential if the School is to know and understand the needs of its student and staff populations and to monitor progress against its Action Plan.

9. Engagement and Consultation

It is expected that these consultation exercises will give us a wealth of qualitative data to use in conjunction with our quantitative data on recruitment, retention and achievement to determine the operational and strategic direction of the School over the next three years and beyond.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

a) Purpose

The purpose of equality impact assessment is to ensure that all School policies, practices, provisions and criteria are fair to all groups of people.

The School has a legal obligation to ensure that it does not discriminate against a particular group or individual due to gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion. In addition the School wants to make sure that no other group or individual is treated unfairly for any other reason such as social class, part-time status etc.

b) Process

TBGS has decided to take a 2 stage approach to Equality Impact Assessment:

- Initial Screening
- Full Equality Impact Assessment

The reasoning behind this was that it enables all School Policies and Procedures to be looked at quickly, amendments to be made immediately and an early prioritisation to be made about the timing of Full Equality Impact Assessment.

Initial Screening

The Purpose of Initial Screening is 2-fold:

- to identify any immediate changes that may be needed to School policies, practices, provisions or criteria in order to eliminate any adverse effects on particular groups.
- to prioritise these policies, practices, provisions or criteria so that a full impact assessment is carried out on every policy, practice, provision or criterion in order of importance.

The statement below will be included in all school policies to illustrate the School's commitment to equality and diversity and to indicate that it has undergone an initial equality impact assessment screening.

'TBGS's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request.'

If you think we can improve the fairness of this policy please contact the School Business Manager.

Where appropriate, the following additional sentence should also be added:

‘Every effort has been made to use images and examples from a diverse range of sources, representative of people from different social, cultural and religious backgrounds, from both genders, disabled and able-bodied and different age groups.’

Full Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of Full Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, procedure or regulation is carried out to determine whether it has a differential impact on identifiable groups of people. A policy can adversely affect different groups of people in different ways, and the aim is to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

It can be seen as a quality control mechanism, with an initial screening for equality relevance. A Full Equality Impact Assessment involves assessing whether the policy or procedure could have a negative impact on any particular group of people.

All School level policies and procedures are subject to an Initial Screening. From this exercise, the list of policies and procedures will be prioritised for Full Equality Impact Assessment so that each one will undergo Full Equality Impact Assessment within three years. This list will go to the Governors for consideration and decision.

As part of the process it will be necessary to identify what data is required in order to assess if there is negative impact occurring. Disabled staff and students will be actively encouraged to contribute to the prioritisation of the policies and procedures for Full Equality Impact Assessment.

11. The Action Plan

Our main priorities will be:

- The School Curriculum
- The Physical Environment
- The Delivery of Information – Including the updating of school policies.

12. Monitoring the Action Plan

The Senior Management Team, on behalf of the Governing Body, will monitor the Action Plan and report to the Board of Governors, annually. The annual report will contain progress against the Action Plan, the results of the data gathering and the use made of the data.

The Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan will be sent to all Departments and made available to staff, students and potential students and employees via the School’s website. Reference to the Scheme and Action Plan will be included in all Handbooks and staff induction materials.

The DES Steering Group will consider regular monitoring reports of qualitative and quantitative student and staff data. Where monitoring shows that our policies and procedures are not working effectively we will put in place actions to address this.

The School Business Manager will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of the whole Action Plan.