

Reasonable Adjustments

For children and young people with special educational needs and/or a disability, attending school can be more challenging than for their friends. There are additional challenges to getting around school or accessing their learning and social opportunities. This is what we mean by 'accessibility' and a school should make reasonable adjustments to make things easier.

This factsheet explains how schools have to make reasonable adjustments for children and young people with SEND in education.

1. What does the Law say?

The Equalities Act 2010 requires schools to make reasonable adjustments;

'to make such steps as it is reasonable to have to avoid the substantial disadvantage to a disabled person caused by a provision, measure or practice applied by or on behalf of a school, or by the absence of a supportive aid or service'.

This means a change to support or perhaps extra equipment that allows the child or young person to be able to take part in a lesson, activity or trip in the same way as their peers.

2. How do we know the adjustment is reasonable?

The Equalities Act 2010 does not specify what is 'reasonable'; thus allowing flexibility for different sets of circumstances.

The core of the reasonable adjustments duty is not whether something is a supporting aid or whether it's an adjustment to a practice, but whether it is something that is reasonable for the school to have to do.

3. What if there is no money to make the adjustment?

Cost and resources are factors that are taken into account in determining what is 'reasonable'. It is important for a school to document carefully any decisions taken on reasonable adjustments so that these can be justified. For example, moving a young person's classroom to the ground floor is considered reasonable.

4. Whose responsibility is it to look after the 'reasonable adjustment' equipment?

It is the school's responsibility for maintenance and repair of any equipment used as a reasonable adjustment.

5. Can a school charge parents or carers any extra for the purchase of equipment?

No – costs should not be passed onto families (this is laid out in law).

6. Does the reasonable adjustments duty apply to independent schools and academies?

Yes, the duty applies to all schools in England and Wales (and Scotland – there is separate guidance for Scotland) irrespective of how they are funded or managed.

The following 'real life' examples will help to explain this.

Please note that these examples are not an exhaustive list.

Wheelchair user

- Small room space provided for physio bed
- School purchased hoist. Teaching assistants trained
- Portable ramp purchased and moved to each classroom (primary school)
- Pupils leave the lesson 5 minutes early to avoid the rush
- For older child, pupil carries walkie talkie and lift key with them at all times.

Visual Impairment

- White and yellow lines painted around all posts, doorframes and steps (inside & out)
- Adjusted all texts/tasks to make them readable (larger text, increase contrast)
- (Pupils use iPad's and/or laptop's (purchased by the school)
- Pupil leaves the lesson 5 minutes early to avoid the rush
- Seating plans for each lesson
- Line painting on walls from key rooms: so pupil could trace line as he/she walked along.

Sensory (e.g. Autism)

- Adjustments to sanctions (make them appropriate/personal)
- Use of tents, and enclosed work areas
- Whole school training (using pupil's first name., use of literal language)
- Lego lunch club (primary school)
- Quite space for time out (secondary school)

Sensory (e.g. ADHD)

- Adjustments to sanctions (make them appropriate/personal)
- Success books & reward targets
- Leave class five minutes early to run around playground
- Spinning/office chair in the classroom
- Fiddle objects (pom-poms, tanglers, blu-tac)
- Ear defenders.

Dyslexia

- Visual timetables
- Keep worksheets and white boards clutter free
- Additional time to understand tasks, complete assessments and homework
- Use of coloured overlays
- Use of dyslexia friendly dictionaries and thesaurus
- Use of iPads and laptops
- PowerPoints given to pupils as aide memoir.

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)

- **Think ahead.** Look at the day and week ahead, to anticipate what might be tricky for the child. Identifying the predictable triggers will mean you can plan strategies in advance.
- **Give the child advance notice.** Children with PDA find it helpful to know what is going to happen, as this gives them a sense of being in control, as well as allowing them processing time.
- **Monitor the child's stress levels & scale back demands.** The mood and behaviour of children with PDA can change very quickly. It is important to look out for signs of increased anxiety, which can be reduced by decreasing demands. It's best if all staff (e.g. playground supervisors, dinner staff, Teaching Assistants) are aware of these signs. At the first signs of stress, it's a good idea to scale back the demands on the child. As the child gets older, it's important to encourage them to begin to identify their own stress levels and what they need, and to teach them the skills to communicate this. E.g. using a feelings board
- **Create space.** Children with PDA find it hard to regulate their feelings. Make sure there's space in the classroom or school where they can go to feel calm.
- **Keep calm!** When children with PDA panic, they need the adults around them to stay calm.

Top tips for parents

School trips and sanctions/rewards can often raise issues for families. Here are some top tips from parents for parents.

School trips

- Prepare your child/young person for the change to routine, what to expect etc. See if photos could be provided in advance of trip especially if the trip is residential. If possible do a reconnaissance trip with the child/young person for residential trips. Check with school on what support they will be providing. Please note this may need to be greater than existing support.
- Get an advanced timetable of the trip to talk through with the child/young person. This should be broken into expected times/route for travelling, places to be visited, activities, breaktimes. Make sure that ALL staff on the trip understand your child's needs and how to best support them (e.g. child may need extra assistance to use an

unfamiliar public toilet). If this is a residential trip it would be best to try to meet with the staff prior to the trip.

- Discuss possible barriers and opportunities with your child's teacher
- Ensure a risk assessment and accessible route have been done
- Ensure that all transport is accessible and that your child will be travelling with their peers (not in a separate vehicle with an adult)
- For residential trips, ensure the venue is fully accessible and welcomes children and young people with additional needs.

Rewards

- Success books – mark each and every success, however tiny.
- Whilst any absence, including surgery and medical appointments must, by law, be counted as absence, if a child or young person is absent due to necessary medical appointments or surgery, please be sensitive to this and recognise that they've achieved what is full attendance for them – and apply school rewards accordingly.
- Ask if the school will apply reasonable adjustments to their reward policy so that the child is not disadvantaged by medical appointments recorded as absences.
- Ask if the school will personalise rewards with the child/young person e.g. some find a sticker or a reward assembly traumatising and might prefer a reward of some quiet time or a certificate to take home instead.

Sanctions

Sanctions are not always appropriate or effective. Adjustments to the behaviour policy may be needed. Ask the school if they will adopt a positive behaviour policy rather than the traditional reward and sanction policy for your child. Even though a child or young person wants to be treated 'like everyone else', sanctions must be appropriate and take into consideration the child or young person's special educational need.

For example, an internal exclusion in a noisy room is a far more extreme sanction for the child or young person with sensory overload or limited mobility, and can easily result in an increase in anxiety and related behaviours. Whilst it is appropriate to apply sanctions when required; these must be tailored to suit children and young people with additional needs.

