



The Schools at Somerhill

Accessibility Policy

Next review due: September 2012

This plan was written in April 2003. Previously reviewed in March 2004, March 2005, March 2006, January 2007 February 2008, July 2008, September 2008.

The Schools at Somerhill (which is made up of three sections Somerhill Pre-Preparatory School, Derwent Lodge and Yardley Court) acknowledges its duty towards both pupils, staff, parents, Governors and members of the wider community who have a disability. Where pupils or prospective pupils are concerned, The Schools at Somerhill acknowledges its non-discrimination and planning duty under the **Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001**.

1. The Schools at Somerhill are independent schools for girls aged between 3 and 11 and boys between the ages of 3 and 13.
2. The Schools ask all parents to complete the Registration Form and to disclose whether their child has a disability, special educational need or medical condition. The parents will then receive a request for further detailed information about their child.
3. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil the Schools may ask parents for any reports, assessments or advice from educational psychologists or medical experts as it deems appropriate.
4. The Schools will advise parents of the "reasonable adjustments" that can be made, based upon the information given and advice received, to enable a prospective pupil to attend a Taster Day, assessment or to take up a place offered at the school. This is done with reference to the June 2002 DfE Guidance to schools on increasing access to schools for disabled pupils, which includes a checklist for identifying barriers to access to schools and prompts to facilitate research into suitable provision for those requiring it. The place and the effectiveness of the "reasonable adjustment" will be reviewed by the Schools on an annual basis.
5. Where the Schools agree to provide additional services, such as specialist teaching for S.E.N., parents will be charged for this service at a level that reasonably reflects the cost to the Schools of providing that service. Details of costs will be provided in writing.

The Schools will review annually their SEN and disability policies in the light of pupil admissions with specific reference to the admissions policy.

The Schools will continue to assess annually any possible changes to the structure of the building in the light of pupil admissions.

The Schools at Somerhill will undertake a fire safety risk assessment on all new and significantly altered buildings and revisit risk assessments every three years or earlier depending on current legal regulation. Accordingly, The Schools at Somerhill will update the Schools' fire evacuation plan.

The Schools at Somerhill will continue to make any newly constructed buildings fully accessible to disabled pupils.

THE SCHOOLS' LAYOUT AND FACILITIES

The three Schools are based in a Grade 1 Jacobean mansion set in 150 acres of parkland. As a result both buildings and grounds are subject to the most rigorous assessment for any requests for planning permission. The structure, age and listing of the building dictate that it is not possible to provide lift access to the upper floors. There are three distinct areas to the school, the Stable Courtyard area, Old stable Courtyard and the Mansion. In addition there are two sections of "new-build" the Bickmore Hall (multipurpose) and the Walled Garden. The Walled Garden consists of a purpose built dining hall and swimming pool.

SOMERHILL PRE- PREPARATORY SCHOOL

The Nursery and Kindergartens.

The Nursery and Kindergartens are based on the ground floor around the Stable Courtyard. There are toilets adjacent to the Nursery and a set of toilets is adjacent to one of the Kindergarten classrooms to which the second Kindergarten class has access.

Reception. Year One and Year Two.

These classes are also based around the Stable Courtyard. All the Reception classes are based on the first floor, two Year One classes and one Year Two class are on the first floor. The remaining classes are on the ground floor. There is access to toilets both on the first floor and the ground floor.

DERWENT LODGE.

Derwent Lodge teaching rooms are situated on the first and second floor of the Mansion. Toilet facilities can be found on the first floor and in the lower ground floor of the Mansion.

YARDLEY COURT.

Yardley Court's teaching rooms are situated on the first floor of the Old Stable Courtyard and the first and second floor of the Stable Courtyard building. There are toilets on the second floor of the Stable Court building, the lower ground floor of the Stable Court and in the lower ground floor of the Mansion.

DISABLED TOILETS

There are disabled facilities in the Mansion, The Bickmore Hall and the Dining Hall.

SPECIALIST TEACHING AREAS.

The Science Laboratories and Music Teaching Room are situated at lower ground floor level.

The ICT suite, Art and D.T. rooms are based on the second floor of the Mansion.

DINING AREAS.

All three schools share the same dining facilities which are based in the building within the Walled Garden. Toilet facilities for boys, girls and pre-prep children are found on the ground floor, and there is a disabled toilet also on this level.

SWIMMING POOLS.

The old swimming pool is heated and outdoor. Because of its depth it is only suitable for use by Derwent Lodge and Yardley Court pupils. The new indoor facility within the Walled Garden was completed in January 2009 and is be accessible to all pupils. There is a lift from the first floor of the building (dining hall level) to the swimming pool and changing areas. Toilets, and a disabled toilet/changing room, are located in the swimming pool changing room areas on the lower ground floor.

THE BICKMORE HALL.

This is a sports and performing arts hall which was completed in May 2002. There is lift access from the entrance to the Hall itself and there are disabled toilet facilities available.

Accessibility Plan Michaelmas 2011 – Summer 2014

The Accessibility Plan should be read in conjunction with the following policies, strategies and documents:

- Curriculum
- Equal Opportunities
- Health & Safety
- Special Needs
- Behaviour, Discipline and Sanctions
- School Development Plans

1) Improving Access to the Physical Environment

Since 2002 we have ensured access to new school buildings through regulatory compliance in their construction. In addition we are conscious of the need to be continually reviewing and improving accessibility to all of our teaching and non-teaching areas.

The school will continue to take account of the needs of pupils, staff and visitors with physical difficulties and sensory impairments when planning and undertaking future improvements and refurbishments of the site and premises. Particular attention will be given to improving access, acoustic and lighting schemes, and facilities and fittings.

Target

Timescale

Allocate disabled car parking space adjacent to the mansion, Swimming Pool Building and Bickmore Hall

End Feb 2012

Investigate the possibility of installing ramps to the entrances of the mansion, to allow improved wheelchair access.

End August 2012

Maintain pathways and thoroughfares to a standard suitable for wheelchair users or those with mobility difficulties.

Ongoing

Research the use of an induction loop system within the teaching areas of the school.

March 2012

Continue to ensure venues for school trips are suitable and appropriate re:

- transport
- access
- toilets
- staff for personal care etc.

Ongoing

2) Improving Delivery of Written Information

The school will continue to make itself aware of services provided by the Local Education Authority (for example, information about the Kent Selection Procedure) for providing alternative formats when required.

<u>Target</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
Improve clarity of signage around school.	On-going
Develop accessibility to website through the addition of large font options.	In progress, Nov 2012
Raise awareness about the importance of effective communication systems.	Ongoing

3) Improving the Curriculum Access

The school makes itself aware of the services available through its LEA for converting written information into alternative formats.

<u>Target</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
At the beginning of the academic year all staff will be advised of the particular needs of any new and existing children which will affect curriculum access.	Ongoing
Continue to ensure that SEN delivery forms an integral part of curriculum delivery	Ongoing
Research potential provision for delivery of information in large print, symbols, on audio tape or in Braille for pupils and prospective pupils who may have difficulty with standard forms of printed information.	By Sept 2012
Continue to ensure that information is presented to pupils in ways which are user-friendly for those with disabilities, e.g., by reading aloud, overhead projections (including those on interactive whiteboards), describing diagrams, and using ICT to produce written information in written formats.	Ongoing
Continue to ensure that staff are familiar with technology and practices developed to assist people with disabilities as needs arise.	Ongoing

Plan Availability

A copy is available from the school on request.
A copy is posted on the school web site