

## **Suggestions to improve Accessibility in School**

### **Physical, Visual and Hearing Impairment**

- If there are kerbs on the approach to a school, they should have graded drops.
- Flat or ramped access. Ramps should have handrails on both sides, be of appropriate width and gradient and have a non-slip surface. Handrails should be colour contrasted so that they stand out. Tight turns on ramps should be avoided.
- Width of doors is important, to allow access to an independent wheelchair user.
- Weight of doors – or how they are hung. Slow closers should be slackened where necessary. Doors pose nearly as big a barrier to access as steps.
- Glass panels on doors should enable users on each side, whether seated or standing, both to see each other and to be seen.
- Easy to use and colour contrasted door handles – not knobs. The height of handles is also important and should be accessible to a wheelchair user.
- Security systems such as intercoms, should be mounted at a height appropriate to all, whether seated or standing, and be very clearly labelled.
- Reception desks and the hatches in Canteens or Halls used for dining should be accessible to all and labelled at an appropriate height.
- Colour contrast:
  1. Between doors and their frames.
  2. Between handles and doors.
  3. Between furniture and the floor covering and walls.
  4. Between basins and their tiles.
- Clear labelling – well contrasted labels with contrasting borders and mounted at a height appropriate to all users whether seated or standing.
- Circulation space in corridors, classrooms and WC's. Ambulant disabled people should be able to raise and lower themselves in a standard cubicle.
- Floor surfaces should be non slip and non glare.
- Soft surfaces (especially for people with a hearing impairment), carpets and curtains.
- Separated rooms with fairly low, even ceilings.
- Current approved level of diffused lighting.

- Absorbent or acoustic ceiling tiles (down walls too if possible). "Soundsoak" is usefully used in some schools.
- Blinds and curtains to cut down/out glare. This should include corridors and stairwells where there is almost always a lot of glare.
- Any steps or stairs should have the top and front edges of their treads highlighted in yellow or white – burned on where there is a lot of traffic.
- At least one wheelchair users' WC. This should, wherever possible, be centrally installed and so approachable from either side or the front. This is important for users who either are paralysed on the "wrong" side, who need to approach the pedestal from the front or who need two helpers to put them on the pedestal.
- White boards give a better level of contrast than black ones.
- Sinks should be accessible – ie low enough and hollow underneath. Equally, some people will need to stand at sinks.
- Power sockets should be accessible to seated users – over benches are not accessible but sockets can be put on the front or end of benches. These points are especially important in I.T. suites, Technology Rooms and Science Laboratories.
- Non-gloss paint gives less glare.
- Children (and adults) need a range of seating and work surface height.
- Storage and equipment should be accessible to people with physical or visual impairment (ie at a height appropriate to all, whether seated or standing and clearly labelled).

(For detail refer to "designing for Accessibility")