



## **Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Children and Young People**

Reasonable adjustments can be largely described as the positive steps educational settings must take to enable a disabled pupil to participate in the life of the nursery, school or college. The term **reasonable adjustments** is often used in quite a general way to apply to all children with Special Educational Needs. In law, it is specifically about the changes made to support a disabled child. Having said that, the term 'disability' is quite a broad one (see the section below) and many children and young people who have special educational needs have a disability too.

### **What does 'disabled' mean?**

*A child or young person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (section 6 of the Equality Act 2010).*

"Substantial" means more than minor or trivial and "long term" means lasting more than one year or likely to last more than one year.

This is a wide definition, and disabilities can include physical and mental health conditions as well as learning disabilities. The following are examples but not limited to:

- hearing and sight impairments
- long-term physical or mental health conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, anxiety, and depression
- conditions that change, so sometimes symptoms are minor and at other times they are more severe, such as rheumatoid arthritis, ME and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- ADHD
- learning disabilities
- brain injuries.

Some children will have a diagnosis but there is no diagnosis requirement in order for reasonable adjustments to be made. It is about the effect of the ability on the pupil to take part in school life that matters.

### **What does the law say settings should do?**

The **Equality Act 2010** specifies the duty on education providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that disabled pupils are not discriminated against. Where something

a school does place a disabled pupil at a disadvantage compared to other pupils then the school must take reasonable steps to try and avoid that disadvantage.

This applies to **three particular** areas and settings may need to consider adaptations to any or all of them:

### ***Provisions, criteria and practices***

This is about **the way in which a school operates**, including their decisions and actions, **daily**. The school uniform policy would fall within this part, for example. So, it would be reasonable for a school to make adjustments to this policy for pupils with an allergy to synthetic materials who need to wear cotton clothing.

### ***Auxiliary aids and services***

This is **any additional support or help for a disabled pupil that supports them to access the curriculum**, such as a piece of equipment or support from a member of staff. It would include things such as coloured overlays, pen grips, adapted PE equipment, adapted keyboards and computer software.

### ***Physical Features***

This is **the physical make-up of the buildings**. Schools do not have to make **physical alterations** to improve accessibility, for example, adding ramps, but they **must** publish a plan to improve accessibility for disabled pupils and include the steps they are going to take to implement it.

## **Settings Should Anticipate Barriers**

Settings should not wait and respond to difficulties as they emerge: the duty on them is **'anticipatory'**. This means they have to think through what is likely to be needed in advance. This means that settings and Local Authorities should, when planning and reviewing their special educational provision, consider the reasonable adjustments and access arrangements needed for a pupil to prevent them from being put at a disadvantage. This might be during an EHC needs assessment, an EHCP review or could be while planning and reviewing SEN Support plans or Health care plans.

Schools **must publish information** about the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils, the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils from being treated less favourably than other pupils, the facilities provided to assist access for disabled pupils and the schools' accessibility plans. This information should be available through the Local Authority's **Local Offer** which details available provision for all children with SEN in their local area.

### **What does 'Reasonable' mean?**

'Reasonable' is not defined in law so there is no clear definition of what would be classed as reasonable. It comes down to agreement on an individual basis that something would be reasonable for a school or local authority to do, or not.

In determining whether an adjustment is 'reasonable' settings should consider:

- how much difference the changes would make to the pupil
- how practical it would be to make the changes
- any cost implications
- the available resources and availability of additional funds
- health and safety requirements
- how the adjustment might affect other pupils.

The aim should be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any disadvantage faced by a disabled pupil.

### **How should Reasonable Adjustments be made?**

In making decisions about reasonable adjustments, the best place to start is with the child or young person themselves. Their views, wishes and feelings are important. By listening to what a child is saying and checking you have understood, you will help to find creative solutions. Sometimes it may not be possible to do what a child or young person feels is right for them. It is important for them to know why it is not possible, and what can be done instead.

Making reasonable adjustments is a great way for a child, their parents and staff to work together to find solutions that can meet the child's needs. Talking to school staff about what works well at home – for example, what comforts a child and helps them to calm down, will be helpful. Perhaps suggesting they offer them a soft toy to cuddle or a chance to step out of class when things aren't going well can show a child that they're understood.

There are many creative and inspiring examples of reasonable adjustments being made by schools across the country. Often schools are not aware that what they're doing counts as a reasonable adjustment. They are just doing what they think needs to be done to ensure that all children can join in with all the benefits of the school with their peers. This approach means a school is much less likely to discriminate against a disabled pupil.

### **Examples of free or low-cost Reasonable Adjustments**

The following is a basic list of ideas of free or low-cost adjustments that settings can make, depending on the needs of the pupil:

- Flexibility with uniform policies (e.g. shorts instead of trousers or round neck T-shirt rather than polo shirt)
- Time out cards
- Reduction in time spent in assembly (allowed to leave if too much)
- Leaving five minutes early for classes and breaks
- [Suitable exam arrangements for SAT'S and GCSE's](#)

- Access to a safe space or sensory room
- Printing out lesson notes or PowerPoint slides
- Regular movement breaks
- Having a buddy within class
- Differentiated or removal of homework
- Remove use of cold calling for pupil
- Allowing extra processing time
- Printing with dyslexia friendly paper and font
- Supporting the use of noise blocking headphones
- Work area free from visual clutter
- Learning check in
- Highlighting and explaining when changes will be happening
- Asking pupil to repeat instructions back to gauge understanding
- Allowing a pupil to wear a hoodie and put it up if has sensory overload
- Arriving late without interrogation
- Being able to sit on a chair instead of the carpet
- Achieving a 100% attendance allows for absence due to disability
- Use of a laptop
- Choice of where to eat lunch
- Changing after PE – allowed to wear PE kit in school after a PE lesson instead of changing back into school uniform.

### **School Trips and Out-of-School Activities**

Pupils with disabilities should have **equal access to the social activities** which are part of school life, including school trips and out of school activities that are managed by the school.

A **risk assessment approach** is recommended to help plan for various scenarios which could happen when they are on a school trip. Schools should consider the specific needs of the pupil at planning stage of any trip. At the planning stage of trips, discussing and recording together with the family and child what reasonable adjustments can be made so that the child can participate, works well. This might include considering alternative trips to those previously arranged by the school, providing additional assistance to enable the disabled pupil to attend or allowing the disabled pupil to attend for only some of the trip.

### **Next Steps**

Any adjustments that may need to be made for a pupil with disabilities should be discussed and agreed together with the pupil and their parent carers. The school should have plans in place to record any adjustments made such as on a Healthcare Plan, SEN Support plan or Education, Health and Care plan and they should have processes in place for non-teaching staff to be made aware of the adjustments agreed.

Meetings to discuss the adjustments that education settings are making may help to ensure transparency and dialogue about individual pupils' needs and support.

Where there are disagreements, settings' complaints proceedings could be followed.

SEND And You SENDIAS service could help. Contact SEND And You [HERE](#).

Further information about disability discrimination can be found on the IPSEA website [here](#).