



ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Date Approved by Board	February 2024
Next Review Due	August 2026

Introduction

APTCOO - A Place to Call Our Own, is a registered charity based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, working to improve the life chances of children, young people and their families who experience a wide range of barriers created by having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These barriers include conditions affecting social & educational, development and behaviour. Young people may experience neurological conditions and physical disabilities too. At the earliest opportunity we provide a wide range of information, advice, and access to a personalised range of specialist health, care and education support services for children and young people with SEND and their whole family unit. We work as equals with young people and their families to help create better opportunities to succeed in life.

APTCOO is an Ofsted registered Independent Special School and specialist alternative education provider using highly innovative and creative practical strategies that turn opportunities into real and successful change. We work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and local schools to deliver flexible alternative education provision and short breaks activities that will ultimately improve young people's well-being, attendance, and achievement together with confidence to re-engage back into mainstream school and have improved social confidence. We can offer unique, safe, and accessible spaces catering for small numbers of children with complex needs, including physical and behavioural.

Our services are delivered across various sites, at Mansfield, Budby and on the Thoresby Estate, each having its own unique specialism and based within the local communities; we work closely together with commissioners and families providing parent/carer and sibling support; this can help when problems may include getting from home into school or to out-of-school social activities.

We are a one-stop resource centre, open 7 days a week where families feel safe and are supported to improve their health, education, and wellbeing within an all-inclusive community hub setting. Parents and carers can also undertake training and development to learn new skills, build greater resilience and feel more empowered to make informed choices about their family.

We provide information, advice, support, and guidance from pre-birth through childhood and adolescence to adulthood, with the aim of ensuring the young person has the most independent and fulfilling life possible. We support families to make informed choices and works together with a wide range of complementary partners to provide - access to the right services, at the right time, with the right people.

Rationale

The SEN and Disability Act 2001 extended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) to cover education. The Proprietor has three key duties towards disabled children and young people, under part 4 of the DDA:

Not to treat disabled children and young people less favourably for a reason related to their disability.

To make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people, so that they are not at a substantial disadvantage.

To plan to increase access to education and out of school activities for disabled children and young people.

For the purposes of this policy the broad definition of 'disability' is taken from the DDA 1995 as follows: "A person should be deemed disabled if s/he has a physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. These impairments include sensory impairments and learning difficulties and include certain medical conditions which may have a long term and substantial effect on a child or young person's life.

Children and young people accessing APTCOO's services will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which recognises their complex needs which may include, but may not be limited to, a diagnosis of autism and/or social, emotional and mental health needs. They may also have associated learning difficulties of one type or another. Whilst these difficulties may not wholly represent those presented above in the definition of disability, we believe that our children and young people's access needs should be considered with the same level of seriousness. In addition, visitors to APTCOO may have such difficulties and we would wish them to feel welcome and be able to access as much of our bases as possible.

Aims Of the Policy

Schools are required under the Equality Act 2010 to have an accessibility plan. The purpose of the plan is to:

Increase the extent to which learners with disabilities can participate in the curriculum.

Improve the physical environment of the school to enable learners with disabilities to take better advantage of education, benefits, facilities, and services provided.

Improve the availability of accessible information to learners with disabilities.

APTCOO aims to treat all its learners fairly and with respect. This involves providing access and opportunities for all learners without discrimination of any kind.

The plan is available online on our website, and paper copies are available upon request.

APTCOO is also committed to ensuring staff are trained in equality issues with reference to the Equality Act 2010, including understanding disability issues.

The school supports any available partnerships to develop and implement the plan.

APTCOO's complaints procedure covers the accessibility plan. If you have any concerns relating to accessibility in school, the complaints procedure sets out the process for raising these concerns.

Legislation and guidance

This document meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance for schools on the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 defines an individual as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on their ability to undertake normal day to day activities.

Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, 'long-term' is defined as 'a year or more' and 'substantial' is defined as 'more than minor or trivial'. The definition includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, and long-term health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and cancer.

Schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' for learners with disabilities under the Equality Act 2010, to alleviate any substantial disadvantage that a pupil with disabilities faces in comparison with a pupil without disabilities. This can include, for example, the provision of an auxiliary aid or adjustments to premises.

Implementation

Element 1: Increasing the extent to which disabled children and young people can participate in the school curriculum.

APTCCO recognises that the curriculum covers not only the teaching and learning but the wider curriculum such as participating in leisure, sporting, and cultural activities in and out of the school environments. Curriculum access with therefore be considered at a whole organisation level as barriers to accessing the curriculum can affect many different groups.

What follows are just some of the ways in which action can and will be taken:

Planning of the delivery of both education and short break activities in such a way as to ensure that the different strengths and aptitudes of the children and young people are drawn on.

The use of a buddy system, where possible, to help children and young people new to APTCCO integrate effectively.

Encouraging peer support in basic skill sessions.

Developing opportunities, wherever relevant, for peer counselling whenever issues that may be affecting individuals can be discussed.

Element 2: Improving the physical environment of APTCCO bases

Botany Avenue is fully accessible and can facilitate wheelchairs.

North Farm House at Budby is not accessible for wheelchairs

Cameleon Lodge at Thoresby is not accessible for wheelchairs

Sandy Lane at Mansfield can facilitate wheelchairs

Element 3: Improving the delivery of information to disabled children and young people

APTCOO will continually review practice to ensure that information presented to children and young people is done so in such a way as to ensure full understanding. This may involve publishing documents such as learner handbooks in different forms e.g., wholly written, re-written using language at different levels of readability; providing some information in pictorial format; offering children and young people the opportunity to discuss the information on offer thus using an oral rather than written approach.

Element 4: The accessibility plan.

APTCOO will develop and maintain an accessibility plan. The responsibility for the plan will rest with the senior management team. The general arrangement of the school has been implemented to be compliant with part M of the building regulations.

A full access audit of the bases will be undertaken regularly and wherever practicable all recommendations will be implemented. All future works, within the limits of the building listings and tenancies, will confirm to DDA requirements. In this way APTCOO will develop a continuous process of improvement in relation to access.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The monitoring and evaluation of the plan will be the responsibility of the senior management team. They will report on progress to the Board of Trustees/Governors at regular intervals. They may use several indicators to measure the success of the plan including such things as:

Greater satisfaction being expressed by service users

Evidence of the greater involvement of children and young people at both the school and accessing short breaks/out of school activities

Improvements in staff confidence in supporting children and young people

Improvements in the physical environments

Information produced in a range of formats

