

# Access Audit Checklist

The linked audit is based on information published by the Architects and Building Branch of the Department for Education and Skills in the Department's Building Bulletin 91 Access for Disabled People to Schools Buildings Management and Design Guide. They have been reproduced to assist schools auditing their premises to assist writing Accessibility Plans.

The Access Audit Checklist is separated into ten sections. These are listed below:

- [Approach and car parking](#)
- [Routes and external level change, including ramps and steps](#)
- [Entrances, including reception](#)
- [Horizontal movement and assembly](#)
- [Vertical movement and internal level change](#)
- [Doors](#)
- [Lavatories](#)
- [Fixtures and fittings](#)
- [Information](#)
- [Means of escape](#)

The checklists are particularly helpful when there is a need to audit an area prior to carrying out some repair, maintenance, refurbishment or improvement work. It is essential that, whenever there is a proposal to spend money on the school's accommodation, the potential to include access improvements in the scheme is considered. Running through the checklist again is a good way to ensure that nothing is forgotten.

On completion, the checklists indicate those areas and elements of the school that should be considered for inclusion in the Accessibility Plan, as requiring either physical improvements to access or access management measures to be developed and written in.

## **Audit Access for all Types of Disability**

It is very important that each area is assessed for its ease of access considering all of the types of disability suggested — Ambulant, Dexterity, Visual, Auditory, Comprehension. Ambulant difficulty making wheelchair use necessary should be considered as an additional and specific requirement. Often a feature will potentially form an obstacle to any person, but to an increasing extent relative to the type and degree of disability. A kerb causes any person to pause in their stride and is an easily negotiated obstacle. It might not be a serious obstacle to someone with slight ambulatory disability; but it could be insurmountable to someone propelling

themselves in a wheelchair and be a serious danger to someone with visual disability.

Obstacles to wheelchair access are some of the most obvious in audit — steps, narrow corridors, heavy doors, lack of space for a comfortable turning circle and so on.

Many accessibility problems for someone with ambulatory difficulties will be similar to those for a wheelchair user, but they can usefully be considered separately because the solutions might be different. Although it is likely that most spaces accessible to a wheelchair user would be accessible to someone with ambulatory difficulties, there are some specifics. A very long corridor might be fine for a wheelchair user, able to take a short rest when he or she wishes, but an obstacle to someone using crutches who might well appreciate the occasional wall bar or bench. Some people with ambulatory disabilities will actually find steps easier than ramps, and whenever possible the recommendation is that both steps and ramp should be provided for a level rise, the steps to have consistent treads and risers.

Accommodating people with dexterity problems provides examples of the fact that it need cost no more to meet the needs of all, including those who have difficulty in this respect. A well-designed window catch, door handle, or lock is easily used by everyone, only lack of thought leads to the specification of models that are awkward to use. If you are replacing door furniture as a maintenance item, carefully consider the replacement units and take the opportunity to improve access without cost. Consider, for example, a teacher with a damaged hand who has to get help to unlock a resource cupboard because the lock and handle are fiddly. What a waste of time, and what unnecessary indignity - his or her needs are not 'special', such a simple piece of equipment should be useable at a wide range of dexterity levels.

In assessing accessibility for those with visual disabilities one would look at lighting levels, quality of lighting, highlighted stair tread edges, the need for tactile signage, need for tactile controls, e.g. in a lift or to a telephone, contrasting colour schemes, schemes that make doors and passageways stand out,

For auditory disabilities you would look at harsh surfaces causing poor acoustic transmission, need for induction loops, and provision of visual signals instead of auditory - for example supplementing class change bells with pulsing lights.

Assessing needs for people with comprehension disabilities is rather more subtle. Reinforcing signage with pictograms, or even the use of only a standard pictogram without text, is common practice in public buildings. Instructions, for example on how to use the school's secure entrance, should be brief and clearly written. Access to assistance if required should always be clearly indicated. Remember that we are

talking about all users of the site, including a dyslexic parent who has been directed to the Open Day room in which their child's artwork is exhibited. We all have comprehension difficulties at times, for example when you are late for a flight and suddenly all the signage that seems so clear when you are in a relaxed state of mind appears to be contradictory as you try to find your departure gate. For some people this is the norm, and the less hostile we can make the environment the better.