

ENGLISH MARTYRS CATHOLIC ACADEMY, LONG EATON

ACCESSIBILITY AUDIT

1.0 EXTERNAL APPROACHES

- 1.0.1 Access to the school is off Bracken Road. A generous lay-by exists on Bracken Road adjacent to the main entrance gates. This lay-by has been designated a suitable drop-off point for persons with restricted mobility; and two standard disabled symbols have been painted on the lay-by. From this lay-by there is level access through the main gates to the front entrance doors.
- 1.0.2 There are two car parks, both directly accessed off Bracken Road. The staff car park is somewhat restricted, especially when delivery vehicles are accessing the kitchen and wheelie bin area. This car park has no bay markings or dedicated disabled parking bay. This is not considered critical because of the designated areas on the lay-by previously described. The car park surface is uneven, but in our view is not a priority issue in terms of accessibility.

The second car park is intended for visitors and for dropping-off pupils who arrive by car. There are clear bay markings but no dedicated disabled bay. From this car park there is level access to the main entrance.

1.1 External Circulation Areas

- 1.1.1 The level site presents few problems for disabled users; with ease of traversing restricted only by the uneven surfaces. This problem is particularly prevalent to the tarmac path that skirts the kitchen area and Classrooms 10 and 9. This is uneven in numerous places, constituting a trip hazard particularly for people with restricted mobility or impaired vision.
- 1.1.2 The surface of the Junior playground is worn and uneven which could give problems for people with limited mobility or impaired vision. Adjacent areas of slabbing exhibit open joints and isolated unevenness, which could present problems for the same disabled persons. There are also two separate drainage gullies that, due to the depth, could constitute a hazard to all users.
- 1.1.3 Various fire exits open out onto the playground/paths and involve the negotiation of individual steps ranging from 90mm to 150mm high. These constitute a barrier for wheelchair users and could cause some difficulties for users with restricted mobility or visual impairment.
- 1.1.4 We recommend the resurfacing of the Junior playground together with some footpaths. Elimination of some steps by the creation of splayed tarmac ramps could ideally be undertaken at the same time.

2.0 MAIN SCHOOL ENTRANCE

- 2.0.1 The main entrance is approached via a tarmacadam footpath. Visitors are sighted directly from the school office/reception. The audio intercom unit is located to the right of the entrance door. Unfortunately, this has been set too high and too far into the corner for wheelchair or limited mobility users to access. The electronic door lock is controlled from within the school office/reception.
- 2.0.2 The asymmetric entrance door-set offers an adequate single leaf clear opening for all users. The glazed doors offer good sighting from both sides and the door handles are suitable for all users.

3.0 MAIN BUILDING INTERNALLY

3.0.1 Reception Lobby

The secure Reception Lobby provides access to the rest of the school accommodation via an asymmetric doorset with electronic doorlock controlled from within the office. The glazed doorset provides adequate vision from both sides, and the handle is suitable for all users.

The Reception hatchway is suitable in size and height for all users. In front of the hatchway is a narrow counter that is set at a height convenient for wheelchair users. Ideally it should be at least 500mm wide, thereby making it more functional as a working surface particularly for wheelchair users.

There is adequate room within the lobby for wheelchairs to be manoeuvred with no obstructions.

3.0.2 Horizontal Circulation

The main spinal corridor varies in overall width between 1890mm and 1455mm, with some obstructions in the form of individual pieces of furniture. This reduces the clear access in the worst scenario ~ by the Year 5 Classroom ~ to 900mm. This needs to be managed as a visually impaired person could have difficulties in identifying and negotiating individual obstructions.

Adjacent to the Junior Cloakroom area is some low level heating pipes that protrude into the corridor at ankle level. These constitute a hazard for all users, but particularly for visually impaired people. We recommend these pipes be painted using a strong primary colour for improved visual identification.

Most rooms within the school offer the minimum acceptable clear door openings of 750mm, to allow wheelchair passage. We are concerned that the existing Library door barely offers an adequate clear opening, whilst being

located at the end of a short passageway alongside which are located photocopying machines. This would create serious access problems for a wheelchair user.

Two external doors leading from the toilet accommodation out onto the Infant's playground are too narrow for wheelchair access. However, this is not considered critical, as alternative facilities and access are available nearby.

We recommend that any doorway of inadequate width be upgraded in a phased programme in association with on-going redecoration works.

3.0.3 Vertical Circulation

Close to the Junior Cloakroom area is a section of vinyl tile flooring which is curling up at the edges. This constitutes a trip hazard for all users, but particularly for those with restricted mobility or impaired vision. This is as much a health and safety issue as one of accessibility. Early replacement with vinyl sheet flooring is strongly recommended.

There are a small number of mat wells and individual mats located around the school. These are potential trip hazards for all users but can create problems particularly for the visually impaired or those with restricted mobility. We recommend the in-filling of the mat wells and the introduction of feather edged entrance matting.

3.0.4 Toilet Accommodation

There is a wheelchair accessible toilet accommodation located adjacent to the Entrance Hall, which doubles up as the Male Staff/Visitor toilet. This accommodation complies with '*The Disability Discrimination Act 1995*' (D.D.A. 1995).

A second wheelchair accessible toilet accommodation is located close to Classroom 8 and the Junior Cloakroom. This toilet accommodation also incorporates a walk-in shower facility. This accommodation also complies with the D.D.A. (1995).

As both toilet facilities are located at separate ends of the school building, the school complies with '*The Building Regulations 2000, Part M, Section 5.10, h (I)*'. This means that no wheelchair user has to travel more than 40 metres from any part of the building to the nearest dedicated toilet facility.

3.0.5 Acoustical Needs

Presently, the school has no provision for users with hearing impairment.

In view of the fact that the Assembly/Dining Hall is available for school and parish activities, the installation of an induction loop system is considered a necessary accessibility facility. Often these are incorporated within a comprehensive audio/visual installation.

It is recognised that before any pupil comes to the school any issues relating to hearing impairment would be identified by the O.T. or SENCO and that individual-specific provisions made accordingly.

3.0.6 Visual Needs

The level of internal signage should be regularly reviewed, especially in terms of disabled-specific access as circumstances change. Any changes, or improvements, should not take precedence over signage improvements required under any fire risk assessment surveys.

The present colour contrast between doors and adjacent surfaces is generally reasonable, and should be maintained or improved in subsequent redecoration programmes. Ideally, door handles should in the long term be both ergonomic in design and finished in strong primary colours to improve identification by visually impaired users. Most doors have good vision panels for sighting purposes.

Generally the natural and artificial lighting levels are good throughout the building.

The highlighting of external step nosings needs to be maintained. This is as much a health and safety issue as one of accessibility.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The school has made considerable progress since the original audit in October 2004, in recognising and addressing the needs of disabled users. However, there remain some outstanding issues that prevent wheelchair, limited ambulatory, hearing and visually impaired users from realising their full potential.

To address these deficiencies, and in order to comply with the terms of *'The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)'*, a disabled access plan needs to be drawn up with clear priority indicators.

We are of the opinion that the following areas require priority consideration:-

- (a) Replace vinyl tiles around the Junior Cloakroom.

Roger Ivens
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