Access Planning Key messages for schools

**1. Someone else's plan is unlikely to fit your school**

Copy good ideas, but don't copy someone else's plan. Every school is different and someone else's plan is unlikely to be relevant to your disabled pupils at your school.

**2. The best plans start with your school and your pupils**

Plans need to start with the school's own information and data about their disabled pupils and the extent to which they have access to every area of school life.

**3. There are more disabled pupils than you think**

Crucial to effective planning is a clear understanding of which pupils count as disabled. Most people are surprised to find out how many are included in the disability definition in the Equality Act. [14 million people 20% of the population]

**4. Consultation is crucial**

Consult pupils and parents and schools will get good practical solutions to increasing access for them. Consult early and schools are more likely to get help in identifying low cost or no cost solutions.

**5. Knowing where to go for support**

All schools may need to supplement and complement their own expertise. A range of different forms of support is available to most schools: supportive colleague networks, specialist advisory support, different sections of the local authority, other agencies, local and national voluntary organisations.

**6. Nobody can do this on their own: these duties need a school wide response**

It needs everyone to take the lead in respect of accessibility within their area of responsibility: access to the curriculum in the hands of those with curriculum responsibilities; access to the pastoral life of the school in the hands of those with pastoral responsibilities; all overseen by the senior management team reporting to the governing body/ Trust.

**7. Differentiation takes time**

If differentiation is to include those pupils who are working at significantly lower levels of the National Curriculum than their peers, a significant investment of time is needed to adapt schemes of work. This work needs to be built into the school's curriculum development and its accessibility plan over time.

**8. 'Invest to save'**

There is a strong case for investing in curriculum and professional development. This can improve access for disabled pupils and may save on learning support.

**9. The physical environment is not just about ramps and doorways**

Improvements to the physical environment are about getting into and around the school, but they are about more than that: they are about all disabled pupils being able to use all the facilities of the school. It is as much about pupils with autistic spectrum disorders being able to use recreational spaces, or improvements to the acoustic environment, as it is about getting wheelchairs up a step and through the door.

**10. Share where possible**

Sharing good practice through clusters and networks can spread creative solutions. Sharing development work through clustering and networks can reduce the workload.

**11. Piggy-back where possible**

Where curriculum development is planned, include access considerations; where building works are planned, include access considerations; when ordering books, equipment and materials, include access considerations; when increasing access for disabled staff or members of the public under other parts of the Equality Act , include access considerations for pupils e.g. tenders, provision of employment, services.