Accessibility Policy and Plan (SENDA)

(Reviewer: Darren Carpenter; June 2026)

Applicable to College including EYFS Setting

1. Special Educational Needs and Disability / Reasonable Adjustments

Policy Statement on SENDA

The following is the College's policy under the Equality Act 2010. It should be read alongside the College's Admissions Policy and Learning Support Policy.

Hurstpierpoint College is an equal opportunities establishment, and we welcome applications from parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The College recognises that every child is unique. However, this policy does not seek to cater for every situation. It is intended as a general statement of policy which sets out the principles underlying our approach to making adjustments for disabled pupils and the factors the school will take into account when considering requests for adjustments.

Admission to Hurst depends upon a prospective pupil exhibiting the potential to cope with mainstream education. This includes an extended National Curriculum in all parts of the College. The College must also feel reasonably sure that it will be able to educate and develop the prospective pupil to the best of his or her potential and in line with the general standards achieved by the pupil's peers, so that there is every chance that the pupil will have a complete, happy and successful college career and emerge a confident, well-educated and well-rounded adult with a good prospect of a satisfying life. These criteria must continue to be met throughout the pupil's time at Hurst.

In addition, it must be recognised that Hurst is a boarding school and consequently (and particularly in the Senior School) pupils should be physically self-sufficient. Furthermore, the geography and nature of the campus, which includes many listed historic buildings, means that parts of the campus cannot provide level access and the site may present significant practical challenges for pupils with severe mobility difficulties. Any such application will be considered carefully and sensitively on a case by case basis, in discussion with the pupil and their parents.

Our policy is to apply the above criteria to all pupils and all potential pupils regardless of any special educational need or disability of which we are aware, and we will take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils and applicants are not put at a substantial disadvantage by comparison with pupils and applicants who are not disabled. This is subject to the College's obligation to make reasonable adjustments not to put any disabled pupil or potential pupil at a substantial disadvantage compared with their non-disabled peers, and to capacity constraints which limit the number of places available in any one year group to children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.

In view of this obligation and the limited support available, it is essential that parents advise the College of possible learning difficulties or disabilities at the time of application, and provide the College with a copy of any relevant professional assessments including, for example, an educational psychologist's report and hearing and sight assessments. In assessing any pupil or prospective pupil, the College may take such advice and require such assessments as it regards as appropriate, but will be sensitive to any requests for confidentiality. (N.B. A pupil or applicant is disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. In most cases, disabilities will have lasted or be likely to last for 12 months or more.)

Policy Implementation

Section 2 covers general principles and responsibilities in relation to all disabilities, whilst Section 3 covers specific matters concerned with particular areas of disability.

Section 5 is the College's current Accessibility Plan as required by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The Needs Assessment Template is included at Section 6.

2. General

Admissions

- The Head of College has the responsibility for all decisions concerning the acceptance or non-acceptance of pupils with disabilities.
- Parents are responsible for declaring disabilities of any kind. These should be declared to the Admissions Department and on the College registration form or, if the child is a current pupil, to the Head of Learning Support (SENCO). This is required of them in the College parental contract. Declaration is required irrespective of the provision by parents of any confidential information to the Medical Centre.
- The parent contract includes a clause to the effect that the College's obligations to any pupil are not unlimited. In the event, for instance, that all reasonable adjustments, having been agreed and implemented, are subsequently found to be insufficient for the reason of unforeseen deterioration of a condition or for some other reason, the College cannot be held responsible for its refusal to make yet further adjustments which it considers to be impractical, unreasonable, or unaffordable.
- On the admission of a pupil with a disability, or in the case of a pupil already in the College found to have a disability, a letter will be sent from the College to the parents setting out: the disability; its effect on the pupil; and the measures and adjustments agreed with the parents, and to be implemented by the College, so as not to place the pupil at a substantial disadvantage. The parents will be required to sign and return a duplicate of the College's letter to indicate their acceptance.
- The exchange of information and the involvement of colleagues most concerned with the management and welfare of individual pupils is of the greatest importance prior to the decision to accept, or not to accept, any child with a disability. This process will include a meeting, or meetings, with parents as well as liaison with colleagues in order to establish whether a pupil's individual needs can properly be met or not.

INSET

INSET provides an opportunity for staff to be briefed regarding the needs associated with particular forms of disability. Since many staff come into contact with any particular child during the course of his/her education, it is important that there is a good level of awareness as to the issues which are likely to arise.

Health and Safety

- Pupils with certain disabilities will be at greater risk of accident or injury and boarding pupils may be particularly vulnerable at night.
- The College will undertake a specific risk assessment for all disabled children entering the College and will determine in each case what particular action or procedures may be necessary to avoid or reduce risk. For example, the location of studies in Houses is likely to be a key consideration. Pupils may also need a 'buddy', and this could involve a pupil sharing a study even if the pupil is a member of the fifth or sixth forms. It may be appropriate to install a non-standard fire alarm in some circumstances.

Helpers/'Buddies'

- Mention is made in the above item of the possible need for a 'minder' when a pupil is a boarder. It is possible to imagine other situations in which helpers or 'buddies' would provide support. This could range from an adult being with a child on a one-to-one basis each day, to the more occasional help of a pupil, perhaps at lunchtimes.
- It is likely that the senior school 'guardian' system would have a useful role to play in the case of pupils with certain disabilities.

Reduced Curriculum

Depending on the individual circumstances, the full range of College academic and non-academic activities may not safely or reasonably be available to pupils with disabilities. An assessment will be made as part of the admissions process. Where reasonable and practicable, other options will be offered.

Participation in sports, CCF, College clubs and other activities

Risk assessments will be necessary for each pupil per sport/activity.

Assessment and Exams

Where it is appropriate to make adjustments regarding assessment and exams, the College will take advice from the examinations boards. The College will adopt the procedures of the boards for its internal examinations.

College Trips

- College trips are already subject to scrutiny at the planning stage. Risk assessments will be appropriate for pupils with disabilities.
- It may be appropriate to invite parents to go on the trip or to have another adult 'buddy' present.
- Thought should be given to activities/venues which are more suitable for disabled pupils although choices made should not in any way disadvantage the majority of pupils.

Counselling

It is recognised that specialist counselling may from time to time be appropriate for particular pupils. Needs would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

University Applications

Sensitive, focused advice is appropriate when matching the needs of pupils having disabilities with appropriate Higher Education Institutions.

College Database

- Access to pupil information by the teaching staff is particularly important where pupils have disabilities or other health problems which make them vulnerable or can put them at risk in particular situations.
- The College database enables information to be held which is relevant to the needs of pupils. The database incorporates information concerning medical/health issues; particular risks or concerns arising from a disability; and learning difficulties.

3. Specific Disabilities

Pupils who have mental illness/mental health problems

- Pupils falling into this category can be the most challenging for schools. Procedures are already in place for dealing with pupils at risk. In most cases the College's Medical Centre is the first port of call. However, difficulty and delay in accessing the appropriate psychiatric services may be difficult given the pressures on these services generally. It might be appropriate to research a list of experts including those whose services are available privately.
- The College must know the details concerning pupils' medication requirements.
- Pupils will be subject to a clear and appropriate set of rules.
- Staff should know where pupils are at all times.

Pupils who have learning difficulties

- In the case of pupils with learning difficulties, it should always be established whether on any previous occasion additional support has been recommended. Since all pupils are tested prior to admission, learning difficulties should generally be apparent at the outset.
- Further details are given in the Learning Support Policy.

Pupils who are deaf/have hearing loss

- The College has experience of catering for pupils with hearing loss and will provide additional facilities as necessary, depending on individual need. These may include specific arrangements to ensure that the pupil is able to access the curriculum; arrangements to ensure that general instructions and announcements made verbally can be accessed; and physical aids to ensure the Health and Safety of the pupil concerned across the campus, particularly if boarding.
- The College will consider installing hearing loop technology in public buildings, but it is unlikely to be feasible to extend this to all buildings around the campus. Portable hearing loops are provided at key reception points, and further provision is included in the Accessibility Plan at Section 5.

Pupils who are blind/have visual impairments

- Applications from pupils who are blind or who have significant visual impairments will be considered carefully and sensitively on a case by case basis, having regard to the nature of the campus and the support the College is able to provide.
- For pupils with visual impairments, a number of strategies will be considered. The parents may fund a helper. It may be possible to improve or adapt lighting. Braille learning materials are available, as are large fonts. IT solutions are various and a 'minder' could assist with these, for instance producing the enlarged material which the pupil might need. Books and other materials are available in audio format. Larger notices may be required.
- Whereas pupils with hearing difficulties may need to receive written notices, those with visual impairments may need to be told about announcements and other information which is normally transmitted in visual form.

Pupils who have mobility difficulties

- The geography of the campus and the College's listed historic buildings mean that our buildings and facilities do not generally provide level access throughout. Applications from pupils who use wheelchairs or who have significant mobility difficulties will be considered carefully and sensitively on a case by case basis, and the practicalities will be discussed with parents and pupils.
- The College does have experience of supporting existing pupils who have become wheelchair users, and various improvements have been made to existing buildings to provide improved access.
- The College will make further improvements where possible to provide for the needs of individual pupils and visitors in general. However it must be recognised that because of the layout of the College's historic buildings certain facilities and areas of the campus will never be fully accessible to pupils (or visitors) with mobility difficulties.

4. Making Reasonable Adjustments

The College has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for pupils and applicants who are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 when they are put at a substantial disadvantage compared with pupils and applicants who do not have disabilities. This includes:

- Changes to policies, criteria and practice (i.e., the way we do things), for example:
    - Ensuring that all parts of the curriculum are accessible to pupils with disabilities.
    - Ensuring that disabled pupils have ready access to information (timetables, regulations and instructions, all communications about College events and activities).

    - Having prepared and having in place an Accessibility Plan which addresses issues arising from the above.
    - Improving the physical environment to increase access.
- Providing auxiliary aids and services (i.e. additional support or assistance), for example:
    - Extra staff assistance
    - Items of equipment i.e. Induction loops, audio-visual fire alarms

In order to ensure these obligations are fulfilled, the College will undertake a needs assessment for all disabled pupils entering the College and for all current pupils who are diagnosed with a disability after entering the College. Responsibility for undertaking this assessment and ensuring that any necessary action is taken lies with the following:

- For new pupils: the Head of Admissions in consultation with the Head of College and of the appropriate School;
- For existing pupils (including the annual review of existing assessments): the pupil's Houseparent in the Senior School and Head of Year in the Prep School, each in consultation with the Deputy Head (Pastoral);
- Educational support including equipment, materials, exams and assessment: the Deputy Head (Academic) in consultation with the Head of Learning Support (SENCO) of the appropriate school;
- Extra curricular and sports activity: the Deputy Head (Co-Curricular);
- Overall planning and finance, physical access, health and safety: the Chief Financial Officer, supported by the Health and Safety Manager, the Director of Estates and Estates Manager.

In addition to its legal obligations and where not constrained by cost, the College will seek to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with Special Educational Needs who, under the terms of the Equality Act 2010, are not disabled.

Needs assessments when completed will be stored with the pupil's records on iSAMS, reviewed annually and updated as appropriate from time to time.

The Needs Assessment template is included at Section 6.

5. Accessibility Plan: Specific Objectives for 2026 to 2029

5.1 External audit

In accordance with the College's practice of commissioning an external accessibility audit every three years in advance of the review of this policy, an on-site Accessibility Audit was carried out by Equality Act Audits on 29 May 2026. The audit assessed the College against 36 aspects across three areas: access to information, access to the site and facilities, and access to education. The College was assessed as Compliant or Exemplary in 27 aspects, including all ten aspects of access to education, and Improvement Recommended in nine aspects. No Priority A (health and safety or legal risk) or Priority B items were identified; all recommendations were rated Priority C (action within 12 to 24 months) or lower. The next external audit is due by 29 May 2029.

The audit findings and recommendations have been incorporated into the Action Plan at Section 5.5 below and inform the objectives for 2026 to 2029 under the three areas specified by Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

5.2 Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum

Reduced curricula based on individual capabilities and needs have been in place at the College since 2008. This process will be continued and extended for entrants to the Senior School with specific learning difficulties in future years and, in addition, subject options will be adjusted for pupils as they move up the school, the aim being that all pupils receive teaching which is appropriate to their needs and abilities. Staff

will receive general briefings and training at INSET meetings on an annual basis, and specific briefing and training whenever a pupil with disabilities or specific learning difficulties is joining the school, or if required because of the changing needs of an existing pupil.

For children in the Junior Prep and Senior Prep Schools, training will be given to staff according to a pupil's individual needs on entry to the school and thereafter every term as update training at staff meetings. Curriculum adjustments will be made as necessary.

The 2026 external audit assessed all ten aspects of access to education, including staff expertise and training, admissions, safeguarding, access to the curriculum and lesson planning for pupils with SEND, access to assignments and examinations, access to educational visits and extra curricular activities, and pupil outcomes, as Compliant, and recommended that the College maintain its existing actions and processes. The College will continue to do so, and will provide physical aids to help pupils gain access to education where necessary, including enlarged computer screens and keyboards, concept keyboards, switches, specialist desks and chairs and portable aids for children with poor hand/eye skills, such as extra robust scientific glassware and specialist pens and pencils.

5.3 Improving the physical environment

The College has a policy of making ongoing incremental improvements to existing buildings and funds will be allocated in the annual budgets to allow for this. Such improvements, which will be undertaken to overcome identified shortcomings and meet specific needs, will include improvements to steps, stairways, exterior surfaces and paving, building entrances and exits, internal and external doors, gates, toilets and washing facilities, lighting, ventilation, floor coverings, signs and furniture.

The Academic block (opened in 2009), the extensions to the Science block (2011 and 2015), the Library and Moore Hall (2014), the New Bury Theatre (2018) and the Music school extension (2019) all comply with the latest Disability Access requirements under the Building Regulations. They include library and laboratory facilities for pupils in wheelchairs, and lifts which provide access to the majority of teaching facilities. Wheelchair access has been provided to St. John's House (2012), disabled toilet facilities installed in the Science & Design Technology block (2015), and alterations have been made to the external paths around the College to remove steps and improve access to the central areas of the campus. The New Bury Theatre and the adjoining extension to the Music School also allow access and provide facilities for disabled students and visitors.

A new boarding house (Pelican) which is fully accessible to disabled students was completed in 2020.

The swimming pool complex, planned in the previous version of this Plan, has been completed and provides accessible facilities including accessible changing provision and access to the sports hall and swimming pool.

The College has undertaken a gradual expansion of its parking facilities over the recent years with improvements to the main, Prep and other car parks, which include improved facilities for disabled drivers.

The 2026 external audit assessed the College's accessible parking arrangements and security gates and barriers as Exemplary. Recommended improvements to the physical environment, covering reception facilities, external routes, internal stairs, accessible toilets, signage, doors and staff facilities, are set out in the Action Plan at Section 5.5 and will be delivered through the annual maintenance and capital budgets. The College is also committed to ensuring full accessibility in any future new build.

5.4 Improving the delivery of information to disabled pupils

The College will continue to give active consideration to increasing the amount of information available in alternative formats for pupils with specific visual or hearing impairments and will make information available in larger font sizes where necessary. However, many initiatives are costly to implement and will only be considered if additional funding is available (e.g., from either the local authority or the parents of the child concerned).

The 2026 external audit assessed the College's internal communication strategies, arrangements for providing information in alternative formats, promotion of an inclusive environment, staff familiarity with assistive technologies and complaints process as Compliant. One improvement was recommended in relation to website and social media accessibility, which is included in the Action Plan at Section 5.5, together with the publication of a digital accessibility statement on the College website.

5.5 Action Plan 2026 to 2029

The following actions arise from the recommendations of the external Accessibility Audit dated 29 May 2026. Priority ratings and budget indications follow the auditors' key: Priority C denotes action recommended within 12 to 24 months; budget N denotes no revenue cost, L denotes below £1,000 and I denotes £1,000 to £5,000. Owners are to be confirmed on adoption of this Plan. Progress against the Action Plan will be reported to the Governing Body [annually].

Audit Ref	Audit Item	Action	Priority	Budget	Target Date	Owner	Status
10.1.3	School website and social media content	Ensure all website and social media content follows consistent accessibility standards, including alt text, captions and accessible document formatting, and publish a digital accessibility statement on the College website.	C	L	2027	Director of Marketing	Open
10.2.5	Reception facilities (Junior reception)	Install a portable hearing loop at the Junior reception and clearly display the hearing loop sign.	C	L	2026	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.5	Reception facilities	Provide written and verbal instructions directing visitors from the reception area to the visitor accessible toilet.	C	L	2026	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.5	Reception facilities	Consider providing a seat with a high back and arms in the reception waiting area.	C	L	2027	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.6	External areas and movement between buildings	Introduce contrasting handrail markings and ensure handrails are installed on both sides of all external steps and ramps to improve visibility and support safe, accessible movement between buildings.	C	L	2027	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.9	Internal movement: stairs and lifts	Where reasonably practicable, improve staircase accessibility through the provision of continuous handrails on both sides and appropriate visual contrast markings at handrail start and end points. In listed and heritage buildings, proposed alterations should be assessed individually taking into account of their impact on historic fabric, architectural significance, physical constrains and necessary listed building consents. Where physical alterations are not appropriate or feasible, consider suitable alternative measures to improve accessibility and safety. Ensure lift access is clearly signposted wherever available.	C	I	2028	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.10	Accessible toilets	Standardise all accessible toilets by installing contrasting grab rails and accessible height fixtures, adding coat hooks and shelves for stoma users, ensuring emergency pull cords reach floor level, fitting emergency aid repeater beacons, and providing staff training on emergency alarm response.	C	L	2027	Director of Estates	Open

Audit Ref	Audit Item	Action	Priority	Budget	Target Date	Owner	Status
10.2.13	School signage (internal and external)	Carry out a full review with a view to standardising all signage by ensuring mixed case lettering, improving visual contrast and consistency across buildings, and expanding clear wayfinding between key areas.	C	L	2028	Director of Estates/ Director of Marketing	Open
10.2.18	Doors	Where reasonably practicable, replace non-compliant door with suitable accessible designs such as D style lever handles, and ensure adequate visual contrast between door furniture and surrounding surfaces. Adjust door closing mechanisms where necessary to ensure doors can be opened with reasonable ease and close safely and smoothly. In listed and heritage buildings proposed alterations should be assessed individually, taking into account their impact on historic fabric, architectural significance and any necessary listed building consents. Where alterations ould be inappropriate or impracticable, consider alternative measures to improve accessibility while preserving the historic character of the building.	C	I/ N	2028	Director of Estates	Open
10.2.20	Staff facilities	Consider providing at least one high backed chair in each main staff/common room.	C	I	2027	Director of Estates	Open

5.6 Adoption, monitoring and review

This Accessibility Plan has the status of a policy of the Governing Body and covers the period 2026 to 2029. It was adopted by the Governing Body on [date]. The views of disabled pupils and their parents will feed into the review of the Plan. The Plan will be reviewed at least every three years, informed by the triennial external accessibility audit, and earlier if required by changes to the needs of pupils, the College estate or the regulatory framework. This Plan is published on the College website.

6. Needs Assessment Template

Applicable?	Issue to be Addressed	Responsibility
	Access to the curriculum	
	Admissions procedures	
	Teaching and learning	
	Classroom organisation	
	Timetabling	
	Homework policy and practice	
	Access to College facilities	
	Sport & Co-curricular facilities	
	Fire alarms and other emergencies	
	Transport to/from school	
	Breaks and lunchtimes	
	Provision and serving of meals	
	Interaction with peers	
	Assessment and exam arrangements	
	College discipline and sanctions	
	Exclusion procedures	
	College clubs and activities	
	College trips	
	Arrangements for working with other agencies	
	Communications/announcements	
	College policies e.g. anti-bullying, SEN policies, health and safety	
	Access to information	
	University applications	

Owner: DRC

Date of last review: June 2026

Date for next review: June 2029 (following external audit due by 29 May 2029)