The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Accessibility Plan

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Accessibility Plan	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Accessibility at The New Walk School is more than ramps and signage. It is the relational, sensory, communicative and curriculum accessibility that makes the school workable for the pupils we serve. PACE underpins our approach to identifying barriers and removing them:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This Plan is in line with the Equality Act 2010, Schedule 10, and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 5. It is published on the school's website and is reviewed at least every three years.

4. The three strands

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act requires schools to plan to:

- Increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the curriculum.
- Improve the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered.
- Improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils which is provided in writing for pupils who are not disabled.

5. Curriculum access

- Differentiated planning is the norm, not the exception, at The New Walk School.
- Sensory profiles inform classroom layout, lighting, sound and routine.
- AAC, visual schedules, symbol-supported text, and assistive technology are deployed where indicated.
- Therapeutic input is integrated into the curriculum so that emotional accessibility is treated as seriously as cognitive accessibility.
- Off-site visits are planned to be inclusive, with reasonable adjustments to activity and supervision.

6. Physical environment

- Premises on New Walk are kept under continuous review for accessibility.
- Where the building is constrained by its heritage status, alternative arrangements (room location, equipment, support) are used to ensure no pupil is disadvantaged.
- Sensory considerations (lighting, acoustics, low-arousal spaces) are part of every premises decision.
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are produced for any pupil whose evacuation needs require one.
- Furniture, fixtures and resources are reviewed annually for sensory and physical accessibility.

7. Information

- Written information for pupils and families is offered in formats appropriate to the recipient — including symbol-supported text, larger print, plain English, and translated copies on request.
- EHCP documentation is shared in accessible formats.
- Visual schedules and Now/Next boards are used as a default for many pupils.

- The school website meets WCAG accessibility standards.

8. Action plan

A three-year action plan is reviewed annually by the Headteacher and the Directors. Actions are tracked through the school's improvement plan and reported on at termly Director meetings.

9. Consultation

The Plan is reviewed in consultation with pupils, parents/carers and staff. Pupil voice is gathered through pupil-friendly surveys and conversation with the therapeutic mentor.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.