



**Somerset
Council**

School Access Initiative (Reasonable Adjustments) Policy

Academic Year 2024/2025

1. Introduction

School Access Initiative (SAI) funding is allocated by Somerset Council to support Somerset's mainstream schools carry out 'reasonable adjustments' to make them accessible for pupils with complex physical, medical or sensory needs.

The funding, and the work it enables, supports the Council and schools within Somerset to meet their duties in respect of the Equality Act 2010 and Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, and is used to:

- improve access to a local school to facilitate inclusion for a named pupil, where this is a reasonable investment, and an alternative accessible local school cannot be identified;
- develop at least one accessible route through the primary and secondary education phases in each of Somerset's learning communities, and in turn reduce home to school travel time and cost.

Reasonable adjustments may include:

- improved physical access to the school e.g., ramps and handrails
- improved physical movement around the buildings e.g., automated doors
- improved access to the curriculum* e.g., specialist furniture and IT equipment
- improved facilities within the building for disabled pupils e.g., medical rooms and acoustic improvements.

* This is predominantly the teaching and learning areas although may include areas delivering extra-curricular activities e.g., after-school clubs.

2. How To Apply

Advice and support is available for schools planning for prospective pupils from the Children and Young People's Specialist Service (CYPSS) which includes the Hearing Support Team, Vision Support Team, Access and Assistive Technology, and Children's Occupational Therapy Team.

3. SAI Panel

The Council will arrange for an SAI Panel comprising of property officers, a representative from CYPSS and other education officers to meet approximately every six weeks under the chairmanship of a strategic manager to consider all referrals, and monitor progress of previously-commissioned works.

Outcomes will be communicated to the school in writing, with a clear rationale for the decision.

The school should liaise with the parents or carers of the child or young person for whom the improvements are intended, explaining how they will aid the placement. It is particularly important to ease any concerns a parent or carer may have when a child is due to start school for the first time or transfer to a new phase of education.

4. Assessing 'Reasonableness'

Members of the SAI Panel will be asked to balance the importance of school access with the likely financial outlay, by considering the following factors

- whether the child has already been admitted to the school's roll, and/or whether the school is named in an Education, Health and Care Plan;
- whether the school is the child's catchment or nearest qualifying school;
- the proximity of alternative accessible schools and the likely cost of providing school transport;
- the continuity of access throughout the local learning community (i.e., from early years to primary to secondary) in support of the Council's 'local first' approach;
- evidence of individual need which requires reasonable adjustment;
- the extent to which the adjustment would be effective in overcoming the pupil's potential disadvantage;
- the overall feasibility of any proposed works, including site practicalities and health and safety considerations;
- whether the cost / impact of any adjustments would be viewed as an effective investment of public resources;
- whether the investment would ensure a legacy for future people with disabilities;
- the interests of other pupils on the school roll, prospective pupils and members of staff;
- the school's teaching arrangements, SEND policies and inclusion ethos;
- the need to 'compensate' for lost space at a school as a result of the adjustments;
- the degree to which facilities may be utilised by the wider community.

5. Agreed Projects

The Council will usually, in liaison with the school, commission and oversee any works. Work on site will usually be scheduled during schools holiday periods in order to avoid disruption to existing learners.

If it is agreed the school will deliver a project, it will need to assume all project management duties and ensure the work is completed to a satisfactory standard, at which point reimbursement will be arranged. Any procurements made by the school should be based on 'best value' principles that include environmental and social value considerations as well as economic.

The Council would not normally seek a financial contribution from an education provider if the adaptations are to support a child with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) in mainstream education. This would include all state school settings, including post-16 providers.

If adaptations are required to support a child or young person without an EHCP, a community or a voluntary-controlled (VC) school may still apply for SAI funding.

If the education provider is not a community or VC school, they should commence discussions from an alternative source such as the Condition Improvement Fund. Voluntary-aided schools should commence discussions with the appropriate Diocese.

If the school wishes to take the opportunity of increasing the scope of an agreed project beyond the Panel's intended commission, the school would be required to pay for that element of the total cost.

It is essential that schools do not neglect their buildings. The Council will not fund any adjustments where the accessibility issues have arisen through a lack of maintenance on the part of the school.

6. Project Completion

A project will be regarded as complete upon confirmation that all actions have been undertaken including final defects and snagging, and upon financial closure.

Following completion, the school will assume responsibility for any ongoing costs of maintaining, servicing, repairing and insuring the new asset. If a school has any concerns about this undertaking, they should please be raised before any work commences.

No installation or adaptation supported with SAI funding should be further adapted or removed without the prior agreement with the Council.

All projects will be evaluated by the SAI Panel. Schools may be asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire, and SAI panel members may visit a sample number of completed projects.

Local members will be informed of SAI investments in their constituencies.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact:

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If you work for a school and have any questions about an existing application or project, please contact:

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This policy will be published in July 2024, and will be effective for the duration of the 2024/25 academic year.

It will be reviewed in June 2025 for the 2025/26 academic year.