Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Units 2005 – 2008

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council aspires to deliver an inclusive education service that:

- Celebrates diversity and respects everyone’s right to education in their local community;

- Provides access to high quality learning experiences for every child and adult;

- Encourages and supports individuals to realise their ambitions, achieve their potential and become responsible members of society.
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Neath Port Talbot Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Unit 2005 - 2008

1. Introduction

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPT CBC) fully supports the provisions of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Act 2001 which extend to the Local Education Authority (LEA) and to schools\(^1\) the duty to respect the rights of access for disabled learners enshrined in the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. The provisions of the Act came into force in September 2002, and the LEA and all schools are now under a duty to plan for, and implement, a strategy for access which recognises that it is unacceptable to treat a disabled person, or a person helping a disabled person, less favourably for a reason relating to their disability, without reasonable justification. There are clear links between the various duties of LEAs not to discriminate against disabled learners (Disability Discrimination Act 1995), to plan how barriers to access will be overcome (Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001), and to identify, assess and make additional provision for pupils with SEN (Education Act 1996). This Accessibility Strategy is primarily concerned with the planning duties, but it is essential that the links with SEN and anti-discrimination duties are made, as it is only by implementing these duties together that inclusion and equality for disabled learners will be secured.

Under the SEN and Disability Act, LEAs and schools must now plan to improve access for disabled learners across three strands:

(i) curriculum
(ii) physical access
(iii) information

The legislation allows for strategic planning to follow an incremental approach. It will take time before education is fully accessible to disabled learners and their families and carers. The LEA and schools must have clear strategies and plans in place to achieve that development.

Within its Education Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP), NPT CBC is developing a strategy for physical access to school buildings. The projected strategy for physical access within the SAMP will state that over

\(^1\) For Schools read Schools and Pupil Referral Units
time all schools will be made accessible, and that there must be contingency provision available to meet the needs of some individual, named pupils.

This Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) 2005 – 2008 will encompass the physical access initiative within the SAMP strategy, and include the CBC’s response to the other two strands. The aims of the strategy are to increase curriculum opportunities, adapt the physical environment and provide information in accessible formats for pupils, students, parents and carers. The strategy includes an action plan at Appendix 1 which sets out the steps which NPT CBC intends to take to fulfil this aim.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) have provided detailed guidance and a Code of Practice to assist schools and LEAs in the development of accessibility strategies. These documents and other useful resources are listed at Appendix 2 at the end of this document, and it is not the intention of this strategy either to repeat this guidance or to develop its own guidance for schools. Any training and support programmes included in the action plan will be based on the WAG guidance and the DRC Code of Practice.

2. Definition of Disability

The legislation states that a person has a disability 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. The effects of these impairments are therefore more than minor or trivial, and extend beyond the normal range of differences in ability that exist.

**Physical impairment** includes physical and sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing, but specifically excludes visual impairment corrected by the wearing of spectacles.

**Mental impairment** is intended to cover a wide range of mental functioning, which may be defined as learning difficulties. It includes known disorders like Autistic Spectrum Disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder but it does not include mental illness, unless this is recognised as a learning difficulty by a body of specialist medical opinion.

**Long term**: the effects of a disability last at least 12 months but can last for the rest of the life of the person affected. Loss of mobility due to a
broken leg, or an infection, is unlikely to last 12 months and does not fall within the definition of disability, although ongoing rheumatoid arthritis and similar conditions which reoccur may fall within the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.

**Day to day activities include:**

- **Mobility**
- **Manual dexterity**
- **Physical co-ordination**
- **Continence**
- **Ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects**
- **Speech, hearing or eyesight**
- **Memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand**
- **Perception of the risk of physical danger.**

This is not an exhaustive list, but it illustrates the range of impairments which need to be considered in conducting accessibility audits and drawing up strategies and plans.

**Pupils who have special educational needs may be eligible for additional support in school but this does not necessarily mean that they are disabled pupils.**

### 3. Vision and Principles

The vision and principles for education in the County Borough are set out in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP). Fundamental to the ESP vision and principles is the entitlement of disabled learners to equal access to the learning opportunities we are striving to secure, and of disabled parents and carers to support their children’s learning.

In accordance with the aims of Neath Port Talbot Community Plan 2002-2012, we are committed to supporting school improvement, inclusion and improving the life chances of all our young people. Preventing and responding to disadvantage and discrimination in all its forms is a process in which we are already fully engaged, through policies and initiatives such as the Directorates draft inclusion strategy, Action Plan for Inclusion, Behaviour Support Plan and the Healthy Schools Initiative.

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[2] A Health and Safety risk assessment may, however need to be undertaken for temporary mobility issues such as a broken leg.
It is recognised in our schools through:

- their culture e.g. recognising and valuing diversity, encouraging the ‘pupil’s voice’
- their policies e.g. equal opportunity and race equality policies, anti-bullying policies
- their practices e.g. variety of teaching and learning styles

The purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that the needs of all disabled learners and disabled parents and carers are recognised as an integral part of the overarching aims and objectives of the Neath Port Talbot education service, and that disabled learners are not placed at a disadvantage in their access to learning.

4. Entitlements and Responsibilities

All schools and LEAs have a duty to ensure that pupils with disabilities are not unlawfully discriminated against. They also have a planning duty to increase accessibility for disabled pupils.

**LEA**

The LEA has a legal duty to prepare an accessibility strategy for the schools for which it is responsible. The strategy must show how the LEA will support the development of accessible schools across the three strands of curriculum, physical access and information. It must include an action plan with targets, which is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. The strategy must be made available for inspection to interested parties at reasonable times.

The LEA must consider the resources to be made available to support the implementation of the strategy, and ensure that these are targeted appropriately to meet the objectives of the plan. In particular, the resources made available through the Schools Access Initiative should be used effectively in support of the action plan.

Part of the strategic role of the LEA is to ensure effective collaboration with other LEAs and agencies, developing appropriate partnership arrangements which will add value to the range of opportunities available to disabled learners.
Schools and Pupil Referral Units

In all maintained schools in the county borough, the governing body\(^3\) has the responsibility for ensuring that pupils with disabilities are not discriminated against. All schools must produce their own accessibility plans, which must be approved and adopted by the governing body. It is expected that every school will review its arrangements for disabled pupils and consider the needs of prospective pupils in devising its accessibility plan. The plan must address the three strands of curriculum, physical access and information, and show how resources will be appropriately targeted to meet the objectives of the plan.

Provision for children with a disability is a matter for the whole school, and not just specifically designated staff or teams. Teaching and support staff should be involved in the development of the accessibility plan and be fully aware of the procedures for meeting their statutory duty toward disabled pupils.

All schools must admit children with already identified disabilities as well as identifying and providing for children not previously identified unless there are circumstances which justify less favourable treatment.

There are two exceptions to the reasonable adjustments duty schools are not required to:

- Provide auxiliary aids or services;
- Make physical alterations to the buildings

Schools are resourced to assist them in making appropriate provision for pupils with disabilities and access to training, advice and information to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

The headteacher\(^4\), has responsibility for the day-to-day management of all aspects of the school’s work. The headteacher should keep the governing body fully informed about disability provision and pupil progress.

Schools will need to make all necessary reasonable adjustments and anticipate future ones in their plans. Schools need to ensure that all staff

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\( ^3 \) for governing body read governing body or management committee

\( ^4 \) for headteacher read headteacher or teacher in charge of PRU
understand and implement a clear policy for meeting the needs of disabled pupils. The time it takes to move to being fully accessible will vary in each school.

**Governing Bodies / Management Committee**

All governing bodies of community and voluntary schools and management committee members of Pupil Referral Units, have a statutory duty to produce their own accessibility plan. The governing body/management committee should, in co-operation with the headteacher/teacher in charge of PRU, approve the school's accessibility plan for pupils with disabilities, and should ensure the funding arrangements are clear and sufficient.

Governors and management committee members have a monitoring role and may appoint a committee or have a named governor or committee member to take particular interest in and closely monitor the impact of the accessibility plan. These obligations include the need to ensure pupils are not treated less favourably in the activities and life of the school, and that teachers and support staff are aware of the importance of ensuring that disabled pupils are not discriminated against.

As with all plans, the accessibility plan should be subject to a regular cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review. From April 2004 governing bodies, in their annual report to parents, must report on their accessibility plan to show how they will increase access for disabled pupils to education in their school. In the light of evaluation and the responses to any consultation the governing body should consider whether the plan needs amending.

**Pupils**

Pupils with a disability are entitled to an inclusive education which offers them equal access to the curriculum. They should, where possible, participate in all decision-making processes including the setting and review of learning targets and discussions about choice of school.

Pupils are entitled to learn in classrooms where the teacher and support staff are fully aware of their needs and the actions required for support, and reduce the barriers to their learning.

Pupils with disabilities are entitled to protection from discrimination arising from:

- Less favourable treatment without justification
- A failure to make reasonable adjustments to include them
Parents

Support to parents should empower them to:

- play an active and valued role in their children's education
- have information about their child's entitlement within the disability framework
- express their preferences about how their child is educated
- have access to advice and support during any decision-making processes related to their disabled child's education.
- have knowledge of the arrangements for conciliation and the confidential advice service provided by the Disability Rights Commission.

5. Increasing access to the curriculum

The primary responsibility for ensuring that disabled pupils have equal access to the curriculum lies with schools, who must ensure that these pupils receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum and are offered opportunities to extend their experiences and understanding in a range of contexts. Except in exceptional circumstances, disabled pupils should receive the full National Curriculum, and not be subject to the formal processes of disapplication.

The action plan which supports this Strategy sets out the specific steps which the Authority will take to support schools in fulfilling their duty to ensure equal access to the curriculum for disabled pupils. In particular, this support will focus on:

- the extension of target setting policy and practice to include all pupils at all levels of ability
- providing expert advice, guidance and assessment to schools and early years settings on meeting the curricular needs of pupils with SEN and disabilities
- providing a full programme of training and development for teachers and teaching assistants on meeting the curricular needs of pupils with SEN and disabilities within specialist and inclusive settings.
Schools will continue to receive support, guidance and advice from the LEA’s support services for specific types of disability, including the Support for Learning Service. The Educational Psychology Service will also support schools as appropriate in the development and implementation of their accessibility plans.

The LEA will provide advice and guidance on the use and purchase of specialist aids and equipment which may assist disabled pupils in accessing the curriculum. Normally such aids and equipment will be purchased by the school, using the resources available to it. In exceptional circumstances, and in particular in respect of larger items of more expensive equipment, central funding may be made available.

6. Increasing physical access to schools

The Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) will contain the Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Units which will require adoption by the CBC following consultation with schools, the Corporate Asset Manager and the Disabled Persons Advisory Group (DPAG). This strategy includes a set of principles which guide the Authority’s approach to achieving access improvements to school buildings. It also includes a plan for the use of resources which reflects these principles.

The key elements of the strategy to improve physical access include

- Securing access to all schools over time through an incremental programme which ensures in the first instance reasonable journeys to school for disabled pupils
- Ensuring that over time, all schools benefit from the availability of an appropriate toilet and washing facility for disabled persons
- Integrating access improvements wherever possible into other capital projects, and ensuring that all new building is consistent with the requirements of the SEN and Disability Education Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the DfES guidance on ‘Inclusive School Design’
- Retaining a proportion of available funding in order to make access improvements in relation to individual pupils
The Authority has a range of information about the accessibility of school buildings, derived for example from the condition and suitability surveys which form part of the Education SAMP and from the annual returns from schools on physical capacity. Work is ongoing in completing a comprehensive audit with schools in order that the DPAG make informed submissions to the Capital Steering Group for subsequent prioritisation within the Authority’s published Capital Programme.

Schools must ensure that their accessibility strategies include an audit of their buildings, and demonstrate how any shortcomings will be addressed over time. Schools are expected to consider how the range of resources available to them can be used to achieve this, including delegated formula funding. They should also ensure that routine maintenance and improvement programmes are used as an opportunity to improve accessibility, for example through the choice of finishes and colour schemes, or including disabled facilities in toilet improvements.

The Support for Learning Service will continue to provide support and guidance to schools on how improvements to finishes, colour schemes, lighting and signage can improve accessibility for pupils with visual or hearing impairments.

7. Improving access to information

Disabled pupils and their families or carers are entitled to receive information about their education and the opportunities available to them in a format which is accessible for them. The Authority will endeavour in future to include in all the information that it provides for the public a note to the effect that it can be made available in different formats e.g. large font, different languages, audio versions. The Authority will continue to keep under review the accessibility of all documents which it produces.

The Support for Learning Service will continue to provide advice and guidance to schools on alternative formats for the presentation of information and the use of computer programmes to produce customised materials, for example for blind children.

Information provided to parents of disabled pupils has previously been developed in consultation with SNAP Cymru, and this will continue.
Consultation with parents is standard practice before information is published.

8. Further support for schools

In addition to the actions already described, the Authority will continue to offer training and support to school staff and governors on the requirements of the SEN and Disability Act and how these may best be met. This training will build upon the programmes already delivered in the Summer term 2002, Summer Term 2003 and Summer Term 2004. This training encompassed the 3 strands of planning duty: access to the curriculum, information and the physical environment. There will be an opportunity for individual governing bodies or groups of governing bodies to request specific training or advice.

Accessibility issues will continue to feature in the training programmes for all school staff and governors co-ordinated by the Authority, providing schools with an opportunity to share good practice and remove barriers to accessibility.

Appendix 2 to this strategy includes a list of guidance and resource materials which schools and governing bodies may find useful in drawing up and implementing their own accessibility strategies and plans. The WAG guidance April 2004 and the guidance sent to schools in September 2002 by the Disability Rights Commission are both particularly useful in suggesting processes and formats for achieving this. The Authority does not at this stage propose to develop its own format for all schools to use – it is recognised that different schools will prefer different approaches. The Educational Development and Inclusion Service (EDIS) will keep under review schools’ progress in developing and implementing accessibility strategies and plans through the Monitoring Schools Provision (MSP) programme of annual visits.

9. Funding

Many aspects of the new duties may not require significant additional funding in order for them to be met. In drawing up their School Development Plans and making purchasing decisions, schools should consider how improvements will help to fulfil the accessibility duties. Routine maintenance and improvement programmes which are part of the overall budget plan can also be used to achieve accessibility improvements.
at little or no additional cost. Schools’ accessibility plans should show how accessibility improvements will be dovetailed into overall school improvement and budget plans.
By integrating accessibility improvements into all major capital projects, the Authority will ensure that resources are used most effectively to achieve fulfilment of the accessibility strategy over time.

10. Links with other Policies and Plans

Successful implementation of the Accessibility Strategy is dependent in significant measure on the way in which links with other plans are identified and effectively exploited. At the Authority level, the key plans in this respect include:

- Neath Port Talbot Community Plan
- Education Strategic Plan
- Children and Young Persons Framework Strategy
- Young Persons Partnership Plan
- Children’s Partnership Plan
- Directorate Inclusion Policy (Draft)
- Action Plan for Inclusion
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Service Asset Management Plan
- School Organisation Plan
- Equality of Opportunity in Service Delivery
- Cultural Strategy
- Physical Activity and Sport Strategy
- Lifelong Learning Strategy
- Youth Justice Plan
- Corporate Health and Safety Policy
- Admissions and Exclusions Policy
At **school level**, key plans / policies include:

- School Development Plan
- Three Year Budget Plan
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- SEN/Inclusion policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Guidance on school trips and out of school activities

### 11. Keeping the strategy under review

This Accessibility Strategy will be reviewed in the first instance in September 2007, and every three years thereafter. This review will include consultation with schools and governing bodies, the SEN Review Group, the Equalities Group, the SAMP Review Group and Representative School Governors.
### Appendix 1

#### Three year action plan 2005 – 2008

**Curriculum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do we want to make progress?</th>
<th>What we are going to do?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Who is responsible?</th>
<th>How will we know we have made progress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue to develop assessment, pupil tracking, target setting policy and practice to ensure that all pupils are included in the process</td>
<td>Identify appropriate assessment measures and facilitate relevant training. Share knowledge and experience between special schools and mainstream</td>
<td>By September 2006</td>
<td>Educational Development and Inclusion Service (EDIS)</td>
<td>Data sets will contain predictive information for every pupil and appropriate targets set</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify learning pathways for all pupils</td>
<td>Continue to facilitate training in learning styles and related teaching approaches</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>EDIS &amp; Careers Wales and other professionals where appropriate</td>
<td>Fewer exclusions and a higher percentage of pupils gaining accredited qualifications. Progression and retention at 16+ in education or work-based training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where do we want to make progress?</td>
<td>What we are going to do?</td>
<td>When?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Activity</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Time Scale</td>
<td>Responsible person/s</td>
<td>Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure that Specialist Support Services impact on curricular access and pupil progress</td>
<td>All support services to be made aware of end of Key Stage targets set for the pupils they are working with, and to advise schools on appropriate strategies</td>
<td>From 2005 support services to have access to data on group targets for pupils reaching end of Key Stage 2 in 2006. From 2006 support services to access data on targets at end of each Key Stage.</td>
<td>EDIS</td>
<td>All support services to measure impact of intervention on pupil outcomes. Reduction in under achievement of pupils with SEN and disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue to facilitate CPD to school staff and governors on disability and SEN issues</td>
<td>A comprehensive programme of training offered to school staff and governors covering all aspects of extended curricular access and inclusion, including behaviour management.</td>
<td>Awareness raising conferences on diversity held in September 2002 and June 2003. Training on developing school access plans delivered to Headteachers May 2004. Further training ongoing</td>
<td>EDIS</td>
<td>Quality assurance of improved inclusive practices through monitoring visits. Good attendance and positive evaluation of training events. Positive impact on classroom practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong> do we want to make progress?</td>
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<td><strong>Time Scale</strong></td>
<td><strong>Responsible person/s</strong></td>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
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<td>Access audit</td>
<td>Undertake an audit of accessibility of all schools</td>
<td>Summer term 2005 and report via Disability Working Group (DWG) to DPAG September 2005</td>
<td>All schools and PRUs DWG DPAG</td>
<td>Report to SAMP Review Group identifies key issues in time to inform decision making on 2005/6 programmes</td>
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<td>Identify schools requiring immediate improvements</td>
<td>Scrutinise school audits / action plans</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>All schools and PRUs SEN panel DWG</td>
<td>Higher percentage of pupils attending local mainstream schools</td>
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<td>Establish an agreed criteria for prioritisation</td>
<td>Draw up a list of principles</td>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>DWG</td>
<td>Criteria effectively applied</td>
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<td>Improvements to school buildings in accordance with agreed principles</td>
<td>Implement Schools Access Initiative programme as agreed in AMP</td>
<td>Current programme to be completed by March 2006</td>
<td>DWG DPAG</td>
<td>AMP and schools’ audit show reduction in barriers to accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Guidance to schools</strong>&lt;br&gt;on how they can produce information aimed at pupils with disabilities and SEN</td>
<td>Guidance to schools on how they can produce information aimed at pupils with disabilities and SEN</td>
<td>Include types of information different formats, examples of schools using such information, web and software references</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
<td>EDIS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Information leaflets</strong>&lt;br&gt;for pupils with disabilities and SEN</td>
<td>Information leaflets for pupils with disabilities and SEN</td>
<td>Include on CBC’s website a range of leaflets/contacts on different aspects of disabilities/SEN</td>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>Disabilities Working Group (Schools)</td>
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Appendix 2

Further guidance and resource materials

Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government
Planning to increase access to schools for Disabled Pupils, March 2004

Local guidance

Guidance from other organisations
Index for Inclusion published by CSIE

Disability Rights Commission
Provides advice, guidance, training, details of publications, useful links and legal, policy and campaign news.
In September 2002 DRC launched ‘Educating for Equality’ campaign, contact DRC for campaign pack.
Education Conciliation service.
DRC helpline can be contacted by voice, text, fax, post or email. It provides information for education authorities, schools, parents and students.

Telephone 08457-622633
Textphone 08457-622644
Fax 08457-778878
Email enquiry@drc-gb.org
Post DRC Helpline, FREEPOST, MID 02164, Stratford upon Avon

Website www.drc-gb.org

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Part 4 Code of Practice for schools
The DRC has prepared this Code to help schools to implement the duties. Whilst the Code is not in itself a legal document, Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunals are expected to refer to it when hearing complaints of discrimination.
**Disability Equality in Education (DEE)**

A small charity that provides training and resources for schools, colleges and local education authorities around the issue of inclusion for all students.

Post DEE, Unit 4Q, Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP.  
Telephone 0207 359 2855,  
Fax 0207 354 3372 or  
Email info@diseed.org.uk

Website  [www.diseed.org.uk](http://www.diseed.org.uk)

**INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE**

‘Making it work’  
Comprehensive training pack developed with DfES and DRC for education authorities and schools to facilitate understanding and implementation of the new duties.  
Available to download from DRC website:  

**RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS (available from DEE)**

**Disability Equality In the Classroom** A Human Rights Issue by Richard Rieser & Micheline Mason. A handbook for teachers which comprises some of the best thinking of disabled people about our history, our current issues, language, images, and culture. Many ideas as to how to bring disability into the classroom as an issue of equality.

**Human Rights and School Change** The Newham Story by Linda Jordan and Chris Goodey. This new CSIE publication provides a detailed account with pictures, diagrams and charts of the desegregation of the education service in the London Borough of Newham. Written by two of the leading figures in the process, it shows how the Authority moved towards closure of most of its separate special schools and units over a 12 year period, 1984 - 1996, while at the same time improving mainstream provision for all pupils.

**Learning and Inclusion** The Cleves School Experience by Priscilla Anderson. Written by staff and pupils of the school in Newham, London. An excellent account of a school's change of teaching and learning for inclusion.
**Education Equality and Human Rights** edited by Mike Cole, 2 chapters by Richard Rieser on disability and education

**VIDEOS**

**Count Me in** Channel 4 video 2 30 minutes programs on 12 inclusive schools **Including all Children** 18 min video from Parents for Inclusion  
**The inclusion assistant** helping young people with high level support needs in mainstream schools. Booklet and video from Allfie giving the views of Young and Powerful

**Posters and Children’s books are also available.**
NEATH PORT TALBOT CBC

Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Units.
2005 – 2008

Consultation – Response Proforma
You are invited to comment generally upon each section of the draft strategy, as well as the Action Plan

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NEATH PORT TALBOT CBC

Accessibility Strategy for Schools and Pupil Referral Units.
2005 – 2008

Consultation – Response Proforma

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PLEASE RETURN BY:
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NPT Accessibility Strategy
15-12-04