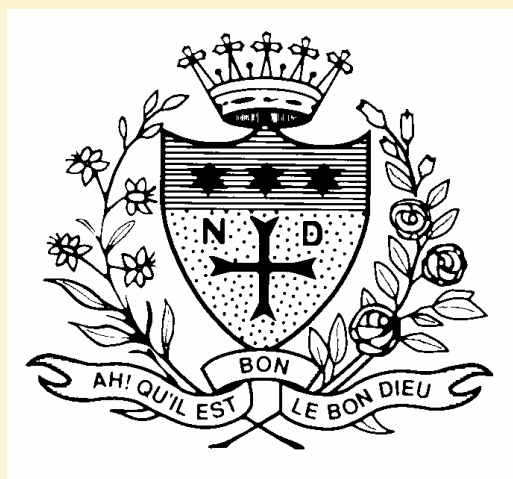


Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College



Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan

December 2006-November 2009

**This document can be provided in other formats
on request**

1. Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA) places a duty to promote disability equality on all public sector organisations. As a public authority within the meaning of the Act, Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College has regard for the six inter-related parts of this duty, also known as ‘the general duty’ or ‘disability equality duty (DED)’ and the Specific Duties. Under its terms, Notre Dame will, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled¹ people and other people
- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- eliminate disability-related harassment
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take account of disabled people’s disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than others.

Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College, inspired by the Christian tradition, holds at the centre of our ethos the dignity and uniqueness of each person. Our work promotes the celebration of each individual, and we aim to cater for individual needs in all aspects of our work, and this forms our guiding principle for the Disability Equality Scheme (DES). We recognise that responding to DDA 2005, builds on the college’s approach to DDA 1995 with a new requirement to be proactive in our move towards disability equality. We believe that by addressing the requirements of the Act, we will improve the experience of disabled people with measurable positive outcomes for them.

Such aims and objectives are fully in accordance with the College’s Mission Statement, under whose terms we aim to:

- treat each other with respect
- create an atmosphere of mutual trust in which we develop the confidence to be ourselves
- provide a high quality, meaningful education which encourages the development of the whole person
- provide equality of opportunity
- celebrate the joy and energy of our community
- support everyone, of all abilities, to make positive steps towards achieving their full potential
- promote a caring environment, working together for the benefit of the individual and the wider community
- develop an environment based on equality, trust, respect for each individual in our community, and full development of each person’s potential, as found in the teaching and example of our Lord.

¹ Under the DDA, a disabled person is someone with a physical or sensory impairment, mental health difficulty, specific learning difficulty or medical condition that has a substantial, adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This Mission Statement applies to the whole Notre Dame community – students, staff, potential students or employees, parents, and any others who use the College’s services, as does our Disability Equality Scheme (DES).

The central strategic aims contained in the Development Plan 2005-2008 embrace these objectives. Within Notre Dame’s Disability Equality Scheme, these strategic aims will be re-articulated to emphasise the significance of the Duty, and will be impact-assessed either retrospectively or pro-actively as appropriate. The amended draft of the Development Plan, reviewed annually following consultation with the Learning and Skills Council, will refer explicitly to the impact on College planning and activities of the Disability Equality Duty.

The following are the current Central Strategic Aims 2005-08:

- Rationalise and improve current accommodation and embark on a new capital build programme to improve the teaching and learning environment
- Develop the college monitoring and improvement strategies in relation to equality and diversity
- Maintain the effective implementation of the college Health and Safety Strategy, ensuring consideration is always given to the health and safety implications of all college activity, thus ensuring a safe environment in which to learn and to work
- Consult with the local LSC, the Diocese of Leeds, and planning authorities and prepare a building proposal
- Submit a new Property Strategy, following consultation with the LSC Regional Property Adviser and the college surveyors
- Embrace the Safe Learner Concept, and continue to consolidate the role of the Health and Safety Committee; review all policies and procedures, revise documentation, staff and student induction procedures, and comply with legislation and with LSC requirements and reporting procedures
- Ensure that the SAR for Health and Safety and other cross-college areas is self-critical, is rigorously audited, and that its development plan is implemented and audited in its turn
- Ensure that general staff awareness is raised, training provided, and that specialist training needs are identified and provided through the annual Health and Safety audit of all sections of college personnel and through the SAR development plan
- Implement a whole site security upgrade to provide a safer environment for learners and employees
- Extend recent audio-visual improvements to all classrooms
- Recruit high quality staff and ensure a match of staff expertise and curriculum need
- Support CPD opportunities for all staff
- Renew IIP status

Each of these has bearing on the needs of disabled people, and an audit of the degree to which those needs are being met will be conducted.

1.1 Purpose of the Disability Equality Scheme

In our first Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan, we want to address the current issues and equality gaps that we have identified so far. We intend to adopt the social model of disability in our equality strategy which “recognises that it is the social, environmental and attitudinal barriers that a disabled person encounters, rather than a person’s impairment, that create disabling barriers and prevent participation”² However, throughout our DES, we will be using the language of the medical model, as used in law.

2. Involvement of disabled people

Having identified as a priority the need to involve disabled people more in our move to disability equality, we are committed to exploring ways in which existing systems can be strengthened and innovative approaches taken to new initiatives. The steps we have taken to involve disabled people in the preparation of this scheme, and elsewhere, are outlined in APPENDIX 1. However, we support disabled people’s right to non-disclosure. We acknowledge, therefore, that this, and other factors inhibiting participation, may have had an impact on consultation and we recognise that greater involvement is a high priority area for development. This is reflected in our Action Plan.

3. The Current Position

Under existing legislation, Notre Dame has responded to the needs of individuals and made adjustments both to the environment and towards inclusion in its teaching and learning strategies (see APPENDIX 2 for examples). In addition, in response to the General Duties of DDA 2005, the college adopted a whole organisational approach towards consultation. (See APPENDIX 3) The website is being re-designed to make it more accessible and the college Student Senate has one representative specifically to give a voice to disabled students on current issues and plans. We are aiming also to become a model employer that attracts and retains the best employees who reflect the population served. To assist in achieving this, we have produced a staff audit which encourages staff disclosure of disability.

4. Gathering and using information

Currently, we gather information about our students with disability prior to enrolment in order to anticipate need and make the necessary adjustments. We also gather it retrospectively through our Management Information System (MIS), for retention, achievement, and success, in addition to analysis of

² (LSN toolkit Core document: The Journey Towards Disability Equality)

Value Added through reports from the ALPS system. The Learning Support department gathers the ongoing statistical information on the number and range of students with disability and/or learning difficulty and this is shared with MIS and the Examinations department, in accordance with Data Protection.

For staff we record:

- the total number of teaching and support staff and within that figure those who declare a disability
- the number of staff who leave who have disclosed a disability and those who have not
- the range of reasonable adjustments made for all staff who have disclosed a disability under the DDA
- the number of return to work interviews held
- the number of annual reviews carried out with staff with a disclosed disability and any actions

However, we acknowledge that to improve disability equality, some of these systems need further refinement and analysis to identify equality gaps and barriers. We will then make use of the information gathered to inform change. This is therefore a focus of our Action Plan.

We look to make our Mission Statement a reality, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust by making transparent how we intend to use the information gathered on both students and staff.

We will consult disabled people about the best methods for gathering this information and using it. We will report in our annual DES review how decisions made on the basis of the information have improved the experience of college for them.

5. Reporting on progress

In December each year, a report on progress against the Action Plan will be presented to the Governors of the college and placed on the college's website by the Principal. In addition, the timetable of impact assessments involving input from people with disability will be available for review. The DES will be re-written for December 2009.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Disability Equality Scheme and its Action Plan will be kept under review by the Disability Equality Steering group which will report formally to the Principal and Senior Management Team each term. It will extend the involvement of disabled people and continue to build on the whole organisational approach by the involvement of students, staff, senior management, governors, parents and other service users.

APPENDIX 1

INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

STUDENTS

In May 2006, we launched a Student Disability Forum with a remit to discuss and feedback on the experience of college life as a student with a disability and/or learning difficulty but had an issue recruiting students due to examination pressures. Following disability equality awareness-raising assemblies to all students this new academic year, volunteers were invited to re-form this group to help prepare the Disability Equality Scheme. We used a variety of methods to extend this invitation, including: the college's plasma screen; a message attached to the electronic registration system; personal invitation to students who had disclosed a disability and by encouraging email replies. Early feedback from the new group has been incorporated in the Action Plan on the need for greater and more accessible pre-college publicity on what is available for students with disability. Students also requested modifications to some resources.

To widen the consultative process, the Disability Steering Group has identified alternative accessible strategies to enable all students to participate. We will encourage the full range of disabilities to be represented in any consultation, including hidden disabilities, mental health and students who have chosen not to disclose publicly. We acknowledge that to achieve this, provision needs to be made that facilitates contribution from a distance or anonymously. Methods using suggestion boxes, email, Moodle (our virtual learning environment) and questionnaires are all being considered for this purpose.

STAFF

Our Disability Equality Steering Group, convened in June, has members who have disclosed disability. Fourteen members of staff, representing support and teaching staff and senior management, have met together weekly since September to move our college community forward towards disability equality and the creation of the Disability Equality Scheme. Liaison has taken place between the Principal, Assistant Principal for Human Resources (responsible for Equality and Diversity) and the Co-ordinator of Learning Support to action suggestions. Senior management is seen across college to be committed to this legislation.

Although we are delighted that the group represents diverse areas of college life, and the level of commitment in time and enthusiasm each member brings to the group, we are fully aware that currently it does not represent a range of disabilities. To encourage wider participation from staff with disabilities, adjustments have been made to the staff audit procedure to encourage disclosure. Following these returns and with more publicity, staff will again be invited to join the steering group.

Our programme of staff development has included an expansion in training opportunities for all staff on meeting the needs of disabled students and a

cross-college basic introduction to the DDA. In October, this awareness raising and training culminated in the completion of an internal focus document "A Move to Change" by teaching departments and non-teaching areas in which staff focused on their responsibilities under DDA 2005 and their progress towards disability equality to date. By identifying one priority area for improvement and how to action it, all staff - including those who would prefer not to disclose their disability - were given an opportunity to effect change that would impact directly on disabled people in the college and these have been incorporated in the Disability Scheme and Action Plan. It is intended that "The Move to Change" document will feed into the college's usual Quality Assurance procedures in 2007 to enable these specific outcomes to be achieved and measured.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CARERS

We have tried to anticipate the needs of parents/guardians/carers who would describe themselves as disabled or who are parents/guardians of our disabled students' as part of our compliance to DDA and to respond to an individual's own needs when informed. Parents have been invited through the Principal's letter about Parents' Consultation Evenings to volunteer to be part of the college's consultation of disabled people. The Disability Equality Steering Group has looked at alternative, accessible methods to enable this.

INVOLVING OTHER AGENCIES

Notre Dame is a member of the Leeds Colleges' Inclusive Learning Forum, which meets on behalf of students with disabilities. All the colleges in Leeds participate and there is representation from a number of key organisations in the city who are working to support adults, including young people, with disabilities. These organisations have agreed to liaise via this forum, giving another voice to people with disabilities.

The Disability Equality Steering group has also identified a list of potential contacts in a variety of organisations which we could consult. To begin this process, the Principal of Dyslexia Action (Leeds) has reviewed our first Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

Our existing links and discussions with other agencies and institutions have also informed the formulation of this Scheme:

- Catholic partner schools about anticipating students' needs
- Deaf START, Leeds
- Yorkshire and Humberside Network of Sixth Form Colleges
- Yorkshire and the Humber's Learning Provider Network
- Association of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges (ACVIC)
- People in Action

APPENDIX 2

THE CURRENT POSITION

Leadership and management

The Principal and Senior Management Team are committed to meeting the general duty. To ensure a whole organisational approach, information about the legislation and Notre Dame's response has been shared with the Governors of the college and the full college staff. The Assistant Principal responsible for Equality and Diversity has attended the meetings of the Disability Steering Group with the Human Resources Officer, and The Co-ordinator of Learning Support has been the lead person for the Scheme, reporting directly to The Principal.

Staff and Employment

- Application has been made by Human Resources for The Two Tick Symbol to ensure we have good practice at all stages of recruitment and retention of staff with a disability and/or learning difficulty.
- All job advertisements reinforce the fact that we are an equal opportunities employer
- Application packs and forms invite applications from disabled people and include a statement that reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate their needs.
- Staff development has been delivered to all staff, teaching and support, on the DDA. Disability-related training is a regular feature of staff INSET. For example, in 2005/6, this included training in supporting students with hearing impairment, dyslexia, ADHD, the Autism Spectrum and with mental health difficulties.
- Staff who have disclosed a disability or who have become disabled have been supported by the necessary Occupational Health Assessments and adjustments made.
- Adjustments have been made to the general staff audit to encourage disclosure of disability to improve our support of staff, including:
 - emphasising our commitment as an employer to meeting the needs of staff with a disability
 - a clear definition of "disabled"
 - the addition of specific reference to adjustments that can be made
 - an invitation to give feedback on how well staff with a disability feel they are supported

Students

- Students are invited to disclose a disability, learning difficulty, or long-term medical condition that affects their everyday life as a student. This can occur on application, at interview, enrolment, their first tutorial session and with publicity around college that encourages disclosure at any time through the year.

- Named people to contact are given in copies of the college's Disability Statement, displayed in each tutor base and in public areas.
- Liaison takes place with partner feeder schools to aid transition.
- Brief details of students' educational and medical needs are listed, with their agreement, on the Staff Intranet (for teachers only) with a document in which the student has identified how they want to be supported, which is then circulated to contact staff.

The services we provide for students include adjustments to teaching and learning strategies (including examinations Access Arrangements) not just the physical environment.

- Notre Dame has forged strong links and had a contract with Dyslexia Action for student support since 1998. In addition, the college funded the training of a Specialist Teacher to Post-Graduate level to increase the flexibility of support.
- Notre Dame has had a contract with Deaf START, the post-16 provider of support for students with hearing impairment in Leeds, for 5 years. During that time, they have provided us with note-takers and radio-aids to meet the assessed needs of students; run Deaf Awareness sessions annually for staff and, one year, offered the CACDP Certificated course for staff and students as an Enhancement choice. In 2005 and 2006, a signer was provided by them for the Principal's speech on Open Day.
- Induction loops are fitted in the hall and in the Lecture theatre and a portable loop has been used for individual students in classrooms.
- Liaison has taken place as requested with CMHTs, as advised by them, to create partnerships between home, college and health professionals when supporting students with mental health difficulties
- Links have been made with Leeds Mind who have been able to signpost advisory and support services
- Liaison and peer support for a student with physiotherapy exercises were offered in consultation with The Young Adult Team, Leeds
- Links have been made with St James Hospital as we support students with long term illness e.g cancer

Parents and other users

- Existing parents who would describe themselves as disabled or as the parent/guardian/carer of a disabled student have been invited to form part of the consultation on Disability Equality at Notre Dame.

Estates

- All new build programmes are DDA compliant and a substantial programme of works has been carried out to render the majority of other accommodation DDA compliant.
- Accessible car parking is available near the main entrances.

- Stairlifts, lifts and power-assisted doors are operational in current accommodation to allow greater access for students with mobility difficulties
- An integral part of our current accommodation strategy is in response to the DDA, following previous audits and current review of college accommodation

External links

- Since 2000, Notre Dame has been represented on SENAC (The Special Educational Needs Advisory Committee for the Education Committee of the Diocese of Leeds)
- Notre Dame is actively involved in the Leeds College Inclusive Learning Forum
- In the Enhancement programme, students are able to work with students with profound and complex needs at VINE, Leeds Inclusive Learning Centre

APPENDIX 3

THE WHOLE ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Principal would like to thank all those involved in formulating this first Disability Equality Scheme and who continue to strive for greater disability equality.

The Disability Steering Group	
G. Brown	Theatre Studies Teacher
C.Cox	Learning Support Teacher
H.Dineen	Librarian
J. Fry	Law Teacher
K.Graham	English Teacher
J.Holmes	Principal's P.A.
C. Murphy	Human Resources Officer
H.Pattison	Head of P.E.
S. Reilly	Asst. Principal – Human Resources (resp. for Equality and Diversity)
H.Stansfeld	Head of Business (Intermediate)
M.Stapylton	R.E.Teacher
L.Swire	Divisional Leader
D.Tame	Sociology Teacher
L.Winterbottom	Co-ordinator of Learning Support
Lead team	
A.Adlard	Principal
S.Reilly	Asst. Principal – Human Resources (resp. for Equality and Diversity)
L.Winterbottom	Co-ordinator of Learning Support
Consultation group	
T.Coen	Vice Principal - Curriculum
Governors	
M. Jackson	Principal, Dyslexia Action, Leeds
M. Ramsden	Chair of Governors
A. Rothbury	Vice Principal - Student Services
M. Shillito	Director of Finance
Staff – teaching and support	
Students' Disability Forum	
S. Ward	People in Action

Summary of Key Points

- From December, 2006, The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, will be amended to place a duty on all public bodies to promote disability equality. Notre Dame believes that by addressing the General Duty of the Act, with the Specific duties, we will improve the experience of disabled people.
- To achieve this, we intend to address the current issues and equality gaps that we have identified so far and to plan a programme that allows us to review and rewrite our policies, procedures, practices and plans, having assessed how they impact on disabled people.
- In our efforts to build on current practices and progress, the priority areas we need to address, including those specifically identified by disabled people in our consultation to date, are to:
 - Involve disabled people more in a truly consultative process
 - Work with disabled people to prioritise impact assessments
 - Embed disability equality within quality improvement and planning processes
 - Gather and use information about disabled people more effectively and earlier to effect change
 - Extend our response to the DDA to specifically include staff
 - Improve publicity about what Notre Dame does to support the needs of disabled students, particularly pre-enrolment publicity
 - Review materials used to support all students with identified needs