

WHAT ARE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

Under the Equality Act 2010 educational settings (schools or colleges) must make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that all pupils have the same access to learning. In December 2012 the Government issued non-statutory guidelines on how schools and other settings can comply with this legislation.

WHAT COUNTS AS 'REASONABLE'?

Many reasonable adjustments can be made by your child's school and may not require additional funding. Examples could be:-

- Planners or notes - to help a child prepare for their school day
- Documents printed on different coloured paper and/or in a larger font
- Permitted breaks in teaching sessions, often called sensory breaks
- Permission to record lectures
- Hand held devices/Laptop for taking notes
- Change in seating position to allow a child a clear view of the board
- Additional 1:1 tutorial support
- Provision of study skills support
- Extensions to deadlines
- Extra time for exams

DOES A CHILD HAVE TO HAVE AN EHCP FOR 'REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS' TO BE MADE?

Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) may have particular resources, support or auxiliary aids included as part of their educational provision listed in their EHCP. If they do not, or the pupil does not have an EHCP, the school or Local Authority must decide whether it is 'reasonable' for them to be provided.

If a parent believes an auxiliary aid or service is necessary – but the school/Local Authority disagrees – the costs for providing the aid or service may fall on the parent.

WHAT IS MEANT BY AN AUXILIARY AID OR SERVICE?

This might include specialist equipment or resources;

- A hearing loop (but not necessarily a hearing aid as these will be needed at all times, not just in a school environment)
- Software /Adapted keyboards/ use of Laptop
- PE equipment
- Specialised support

It is down to the school or setting to decide whether any specific auxiliary aid or service is 'reasonable' - especially for more expensive items, and will depend on the financial resources of the school.

Sometimes it may be possible to make reasonable adjustments by re-allocating staff or changing working practices.

THE TERM 'REASONABLE' IS LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF THE SCHOOL OR LOCAL AUTHORITY TO DECIDE.

Reasonable adjustments may depend on:

- Financial resources of the school, and the cost of the aid or service
- Health and safety requirements
- Provisions already made by the school
- Effect on other pupils
- Effectiveness of the aid

Under the Equality Act, educational settings also have a duty to provide reasonable 'auxiliary aids or services' for pupils who may otherwise be at a 'substantial disadvantage' due to their disability.

WHAT ABOUT PUPILS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES WHICH AFFECT THEIR ACCESS TO LEARNING?

Schools must consider, in advance of admission to the school, potential adjustments which may be needed for disabled pupils generally. This does not mean making adjustments for every possible disability, but to consider what is needed and plan appropriately for their students.

Schools are not subject to the reasonable adjustment duty to make alterations to physical features, such as ramps, or wider corridors. Any changes would be considered as part of their overall planning requirements.

WHAT ABOUT CHILDREN WITH MEDICAL NEEDS?

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a statutory duty on governing bodies of maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units to support pupils with medical conditions. The mental and physical health of all children should be properly supported, to ensure they can fully participate in school life, and achieve their academic potential.

The Department for Education has issued statutory guidelines on supporting pupils with medical conditions. Schools must follow these guidelines, unless there is good reason not to. The guidance does not apply to maintained nursery schools, 16-19 academies and independent schools.