

## **DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME (DES)**

### **Introduction**

Godalming College is committed to providing a supportive environment in which all students are able to realise their potential in terms of personal, academic and vocational achievement and to take on the challenges of life and work in the twenty-first century.

We are also committed to responding sensitively to the needs identified by the communities we serve. We aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need in a rapidly changing world.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), was passed in 1995 with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) an amendment in 2001. This effectively extended the remit of the act to education. The legislation is designed to ensure that disabled students are not placed at a 'substantial disadvantage' in comparison to non-disabled students. The law particularly makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person with regard to admissions and students services including teaching. In effect this has meant that 'reasonable adjustments' are made to avoid creating unnecessary barriers.

The requirements of the Act as regards teaching staff having teaching material available in different forms and making other reasonable adjustments has been conveyed to staff through Staff Meetings and in-service training days.

More recently DDA 2005 has placed upon colleges the duty to promote Disability Equality by having due regard to:

- The elimination of unlawful discrimination
- The promotion of equal opportunities
- The elimination of disability related harassment
- The promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- The encouraging of participation by disabled persons in public life.

The College welcomes this change to the law as it mirrors the steps the College has been taking regarding its the attitude and practice towards both staff and students who are in anyway disabled, including those with hidden disabilities.

The definition of a disability under the Act (2005) includes persons who have the following impairments which have adversely affected their ability to carry

out everyday activities and are likely to last more than 12 months. These include a wide range of impairments and disabilities including:

- Physical and sensory
- Mental health e.g. depression
- Recognised medical conditions such as cancer and arthritis
- Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia

### ***Context and culture of organisation.***

The College intake of students has a wider diversity in terms of ethnic and racial mix from that of the borough in which it is situated. It has been an institution that has always responded to the challenge of welcoming all and willing to support students and staff who need assistance in any way. One of the major challenges has been the support of students with hidden disabilities especially with dyslexia, a condition affecting over 10% of the student body. In recent years students with mobility disabilities have been successfully supported and major alterations made to allow for this.

Regarding existing members of the College community among the students our inclusion list recognises and supports

Dyslexia	141
Dyspraxia	17
Physical Disability	11
Sensory Disability	6
Emotional behavioural Difficulties	10
Other reason inc. Asperger's Syndrome	30

With regard to staff, 2 members have a declared disability and every effort has been made to ensure that they are supported in carrying out their duties. One issue that needs to be addressed is to compile a realistic list of staff who are disabled in any way.

Those applying for places/positions as either students or staff are encouraged to disclose disabilities and special arrangements are made for them. A procedure for students to disclose issues has been established.

### ***Admission Arrangements***

Every effort is made to make the transition from previous school to the College as easy as possible for all students. Before students from the Waverley Federation Schools apply, Learning Support Staff may be involved in discussions at the schools prior to applying. For all students at interview, and subsequently during enrolment, the nature of the support required is discussed and put in place. During the time a student is at the College there are ongoing opportunities through the Student Support structure for students to receive support.

Students are encouraged to disclose any disabilities they have in a sympathetic environment. A simple 'Disclosure of Information' pro forma has been produced.

Advisors from the Local Education Authority's Visually and Hearing Impaired Units, Occupational Therapists, Mobility Officers and Specialist Consultants as well as the local Connexions Centre are routinely approached for advice.

### ***Learning Support***

Depending on the disability or impairment, support can include:

- In-lesson facilitator.
- Special equipment such as Radio aids, a CCTV reader, Dictaphones, spellcheckers and laptops.
- Advice from professional organisations.
- Regular reviews by the Learning Support Manager.
- Special examination and assessment arrangements
- All the general support all students receive including Careers Advice, Personal Tutoring, Study Skills Support, Counselling, catering for special diets

### ***Physical Environment***

There is wheelchair access to all subject areas and lifts have been installed in all main buildings. Present evacuation procedures restrict the use of some areas above ground level by wheelchair users. There are disabled toilet facilities in most buildings. The College has implemented the recommendations of consultants to enable the physical environment to comply with the requirements of SENDA 2001. With the further requirements this area will be visited as part of the Action Plans.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

The College is justifiably proud of its teaching and learning policy and practice and this has been recognised through excellent OFSTED grades across the board and Beacon Status. All good practice requires the teacher to be mindful of the specific demands of each student and therefore will ensure that lesson plans and activities bear this in mind. Regular in-service training where good practice is shared along with peer assessment and more formal assessment ensure that teaching staff bear in mind the specific needs of all learners.

### **DDA 2005**

In responding to the duty to promote disability equality, the College will address the six aspects of duty:

- Actively involving disabled people in the process
- Achieving outcomes
- Carrying out impact assessments
- Gathering information to improve disability equality
- Reporting on progress
- Developing an action plan

### ***Links with other college equality and diversity initiatives***

Responsibility for establishing and implementing the DES lies with the Equal Opportunities Committee which is already charged with 'actively promoting, maintaining, monitoring and developing equal opportunities across all sections of the College.' Further it is charged with 'keeping abreast of national

legislature which may have an impact on the College' as well as 'producing an annual self-assessment report in line with other cross-college areas'. Quality improvements across the College are reported in annual Self-Assessment Reports and the reports of Internal Quality Reviews and External Quality Reviews. In addition disability matters are raised at the weekly meeting of the Student Support Team on which sit the Assistant Principal, Head of Learning Support and the EO Co-ordinator and at the regular meetings of the Health and Safety Committee on which the Principal and Director of Services sit.

It is envisaged that the DES, while being able to stand-alone when necessary, will be embedded into the Equal Opportunities Policy and its implementation will be through the Equal Opportunities Committee on which sit the Principal and the Personnel Officer as well as other staff and elected students.

## **Disability equality vision, values and principles**

***The College Mission*** is to provide quality education and support for young people and adults which:

- Realises the talents and aspirations of every student as an individual
- Provides learners with the knowledge, skills and values to become responsible and fulfilled members of society
- Contributes to the economic and social progress of the different communities and businesses which we serve.

***The strategic aims*** of the college 2006-2009 are:

- To sustain excellent achievement while ensuring every student is given a stimulating and challenging all-round educational experience
- To provide a more personalized learning and teaching experience making the best use of new technologies to address the varied individual needs of our students.
- To be a college committed to widening access and opportunities for all members of our community whether 14-19 year olds or adults.
- To continue work in partnerships with other educational institutions and organisations in sharing good practice and exchanging ideas.
- To maintain an attractive campus with modern facilities and resources respected and valued by students, staff and the wider community.

From the above it can be seen how the College has placed the individual member of the college at the centre, providing the necessary support to perform his/her role within it.

The College approach to disability is that of the social model. The College looks to change attitudes, systems and practices which are likely to prevent a disabled person participating in the whole life of the College. Further to this the College, through discussions with disabled members of the college community, representatives of action groups and discussions with colleagues who have similar responsibilities in the S7 colleges, will set in place procedures to deal with anticipated negative impacts on disabled members of the college.

Any benefit or improvement to a disabled person by its very nature will also be of benefit to the whole college community.

The Equal Opportunities Committee through its policy and activity is already working towards an inclusive environment and the addition of Disability Equality to it placed the new requirement to be central to the equality and diversity work of the college.

From the regular meetings of the DES Working Party of the EO Committee the following specific outcomes and challenges have been identified for the next three years:

- All areas of the College and its annex housing Business Training Services should be fully-accessible by disabled people. This includes doors and lifts which are easy to operate and accessible at all times during the College day.
- A system enabling staff who wish to declare a disability to be established and information to be held in a database in Personnel.
- The College will investigate ways to encourage more applications from people with a disability.
- Improving links with organisations associated with disability such as Cheshire Home at Hydon Hill, DISCASS in Godalming and The Meath.
- An established procedure whereby changes to the physical environment of the College sites are discussed with those responsible for disabled students and representatives of the disabled community.
- Information and teaching material available in modified format within a reasonable time scale.

### **Actively involving disabled people**

In establishing the Disability Equality Scheme Working Party care was taken to ensure that disabled people represented the views of both staff and students. As a result out of the Working Party of ten, one was a disabled member of staff and three were students with disabilities (dyslexia, profound hearing impairment and mobility disability). These members played a full part in the discussions.

It is envisaged that disabled people will be involved further in regular focus groups, meetings regarding changes to the physical nature of the college, membership of the Impact Assessment Teams. It is suggested that each faculty, together with College Services identify one member of staff and one student who will act as Disability Champions representing the views of disabled staff and students at student council meetings and Faculty meetings. Regular requests on the college website and through questionnaires to existing students to ascertain opinions (as part of the on-going quality reviews

and end of course evaluations) will ensure that disabled peoples' involvement is genuine and active.

## **Leadership and Management**

It is clear from the Strategic Aims of the College that the Corporation and Senior Management Team support policies and actions that enable all connected with the college to be valued as individuals and encouraged to play a full part in the College Community. The College is keen to ensure that participation rates are above the local average for all types of students. With regards to staffing we encourage all who are qualified, to apply and ensure that barriers to applying and attending an interview are removed.

### ***Regarding specific responsibilities:***

**Members of the Corporation** are ultimately responsible for ensuring the College complies with the DDA legislation

**The Principal** is responsible for giving a high profile lead and ensuring that the DES is followed.

**The Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator** is responsible for overseeing and managing the implementation of the agreed scheme.

**The Head of Learning Support** is responsible for advice on disability matters.

**Directors of Faculty** are responsible for ensuring that the Scheme and improvements from the impact assessment in the faculty are put into practice. They are also responsible for ensuring their staff know their responsibilities under the act and know where to obtain support. They are also charged with ensuring no-one treats disabled students less favourably because of their disability but makes reasonable adjustments.

**Senior Tutors** are responsible for students who in any way treat disabled members of the community less favourably than others.

**All staff** are responsible for dealing with incidents related to the scheme and for making adjustments to teaching.

## **Carrying out impact assessments**

The action plan indicates the policies, procedures, plans and practices the College will assess for their impact on promoting disability equality.

The assessments will be undertaken by small teams comprised of the person who is responsible for the policy etc. being assessed, together with a senior member of staff, at least one disabled person and a member of staff who generally deals with students who have some disabilities.

The teams will scrutinise the policies and practices for the present and as well the likely impacts on those with a disability. A report and action plan will be

submitted to the Equal Opportunities Committee for scrutiny and then forwarded to SMT with recommendations for action.

## **Gathering Information**

Information on students with disabilities is taken from the application form and notes from interviewers. This will be added to in the course of the academic year. An Inclusion register is produced by Learning Support and distributed to all staff.

Very few staff are registered as disabled. It is proposed that each year staff are reminded of the opportunity and procedure for them to declare a disability.

As part of departmental, Equal Opportunities and learning Support SAR procedure, information on the performance of all students who have disclosed a disability or impairment will be analysed and reported upon. The information will then be used to inform action plans in the specific area under review.

The Equal Opportunities SAR includes information on the recruitment of staff, deployment of staff.

Information from students who live in mid-course will be collected by the Student Tutor team and discussed at their regular meetings. Trends and patterns will be examined in the Student Support SAR.

## **Putting the scheme into practice**

The DES will be published in written form and will be available from the College. It will also appear on the College website along with the other College policies and procedures. Those requiring the scheme in a different format will be able to request it and it will be available within ten working days.

The College's cycle of reporting and assessment will be used to ensure that the various action points are noted, acted upon and achieved. The departmental and cross-college SARs are interrogated by the Senior Management Team and are reported through to the College Corporation.

At an operational level the Equal Opportunities Committee will be monitoring the progress of the action plan and taking action to ensure that departments, faculties and sections of college are carrying out those aspects of the plan assigned to them.

In order to keep abreast of developments in the field of disability awareness as part of the action plans, focus groups will be established by Learning Support, and a questionnaire will be made available for students and staff to complete on line, together with one for visitors to the website to complete.