

Frequently Asked Questions

Physical Disability and Educational Settings

Answers to some frequently asked questions about supporting children and young people with physical disabilities in mainstream settings

A young child with a physical disability has challenges which can affect their 'school readiness' and future learning. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice in England instructs educational settings to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help each child overcome those challenges because every child deserves the best possible start in life.

Parents, carers and professionals frequently ask **Shine** for advice on a range of issues affecting children and young people with physical needs in nursery and in mainstream school. Here are some answers regarding physical needs in schools...

1. How can schools create an inclusive culture to influence attitudes towards physical disability?

People without physical disabilities often see ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, changing places and specialist equipment as the most important items on the physical needs **inclusion checklist** for schools but there are other important support needs, which children and young people with physical disabilities have.

A welcoming and positive attitude towards inclusion is vital for a child or young person to feel fully part of a school. This attitude should be underpinned by planning well ahead and communicating fully with parent carers and young people with physical conditions.

Shine offers talks to schools about spina bifida and hydrocephalus for pupils, as part of disability awareness programmes, and for staff so they can find out about teaching strategies. For more details contact **Shine** on 01733 555988 or firstcontact@shinecharity.org.uk

The **Physical Disabilities Network (PD Net)** is offering schools a **free Level 1 e-learning training module** and will be launching '**Raising Awareness of Physical Disability**' in April 2018. This new module ensures that all staff in schools, from lunchtime supervisors to transport escorts, are **fully trained in Disability Awareness**. Education professionals can join PD Net and receive their newsletter by following the link <http://pdnet.org.uk/>

The **Back-up Trust** adds:

“Above all, the school’s ethos and its attitude towards disability largely determined the quality of the school experience for spinally injured children and young people. A **positive attitude** to disabled children greatly affected young people’s inclusion in whole-school activities and their independence.

A secondary school teacher summed up the importance of the school’s attitudes to disability: “This is a huge school but the barriers are few and far between because of the attitudes of the rest of the school that sees disability not as different or strange. It’s about inclusion and it’s about making sure the curriculum and the timetabling is inclusionary too” (special needs co-ordinator).

2. What advice can you give about continence issues and the training of new teaching assistants to help children and young people with continence management?

The **Equality and Advisory Support Service (EASS) *Reasonable Adjustments* guidance** suggests that it is reasonable for a school to train staff to carry out certain procedures, such as personal care or administering medicine. However, staff cannot be compelled to do this if not in their contract. Schools will often get around this by relying on existing staff to volunteer, but if necessary, they should recruit staff who will carry out personal care as part of their contract.

If the cost of providing this support would exceed the school’s resources, the school should explore additional top-up funding. Some pupils may need (or already have) an EHC plan if their disability means they need extra support to learn. If this is the case, the extra support should be detailed in the EHC plan.

It is not reasonable to expect a parent to come into school to provide personal care, or to take a child home, for example to change them, because the school cannot provide the support.

Further advice about continence can be found on the following websites -

<https://www.eric.org.uk>

<http://www.bladderandboweluk.co.uk>

<https://www.coloplast.co.uk/bladder-and-bowel/professional/education>

3. How can schools improve their current physical disability provision?

PDNet has funding from the DfE to seek collaborative and flexible solutions to difficulties encountered by families and professionals supporting children and young people with physical disabilities.

Standards for Schools and Early Years Settings is a self-audit tool for schools and Early Years settings to **evaluate their current physical disability provision** and then create an **action plan to improve standards for children and young people with physical needs**.

4. How can schools share their tried and tested ideas for teaching children and young people with physical needs?

PDNet's **Effective Practice Hub** for teachers of children and young people with physical disabilities is seeking best practice to share with other professionals.

There is also a **Forum** for education professionals to ask questions and to share information.

If education settings would like more information about PD Standards, their sharing forum, Effective Practice Hub and 'Raising Awareness about PD' training materials, then they should contact <http://pdnet.org.uk>

5. How can mainstream schools provide inclusive sports, games and activities?

Teachers seeking advice on making PE lessons and Sports Days more inclusive can ask for support from their local authority's team of specialist teachers of pupils with physical disabilities. Professionals can also gain advice and training from several charities and organisations such as:

- **Chance to Shine** coaching for schools - <https://www.chancetoshine.org/teaching-resources>
- **Whizz Kidz** - <http://www.whizz-kidz.org.uk/get-our-help>
- **Go Kids Go** - <http://www.go-kids-go.org.uk>
- **Sainsbury's inclusive PE** and sports training - <http://www.efds.co.uk/inclusivecommunitytraining>
- **The Back-up Trust** - <https://www.backuptrust.org.uk/support-for-you/children-young-people/school-life/school-inclusion-toolkit>
- **Scope** - <https://www.scope.org.uk/support/families/play/games>
- **NHS** - <https://www.nhs.uk/10-minute-shake-up/shake-ups#xsIDT2IPKCouHiS6.97>
- **Youth Games Group** - <http://www.youthgroupgames.co.uk/youth-group-games-for-disabled-children.html>

6. How can schools evaluate and improve their current provision for children and young people with physical disabilities?

PDNet has been awarded funding from the Department for Education (DfE) to seek collaborative and flexible solutions to difficulties encountered by families and professionals supporting children and young people with physical disabilities.

Educational settings are encouraged to use **Standards for Schools and Early Years Settings** as a self-audit tool to **evaluate their current physical disability provision** and then create an **action plan to improve standards**.

It is hoped that the standard of physical disability provision in school will improve as a result of the application of the standards audit.

7. Parents and carers have asked questions why some children with physical disabilities have been prevented from going on school trips for a range of reasons.

Preventing a pupil from attending a school trip is likely to be discriminatory, particularly if it is during the normal school day, unless the school can show that there is a good reason for the treatment. Sometimes, for example there might be concerns about the health and safety of a disabled pupil, or of other pupils on a trip.

However, the law places an **anticipatory duty** on schools. This means that they must plan well ahead with the disabled pupil's needs in mind when arranging a particular school activity. This will enable them to assess any risks and barriers, and think about what steps they can take to remove these, so that the disabled pupil can take part.

If this is not possible, the school should consider arranging a more inclusive alternative trip for all the pupils. An informal discussion with the school should be the first step, followed by a complaint if not resolved.

8. What can schools do to make inclusive assessments of children and young people with physical disabilities?

The PDNet team contacted the Department for Education, concerning the **assessment of writing and handwriting**, and the following advice was given to teachers when completing some assessments in schools.

“The interim teacher assessment frameworks for both key stages state that:

Where pupils have a physical disability or sensory impairment that prevents them from demonstrating attainment in the way described in a statement, their **equivalent method of communication or learning** is applicable (e.g. visual phonics for a pupil with a hearing impairment).

Where pupils have a physical disability or sensory impairment that prevents them from accessing a statement altogether, **these statements can be excluded from the teacher assessment** (e.g. for handwriting if the pupil is physically unable to write).

Teachers should use their **professional discretion** in making such judgements for each statement and each individual pupil.

A standard can only be awarded where a pupil has met every statement which **they are able to access.**'

Looking for more answers?

If you are looking for answers to questions about education then the **Equality and Advisory Support Service (EASS)** <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com> has produced detailed **technical guidance** for schools on how the **Equality Act duties** apply to them. The EASS document **Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils** <http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/answers/list/kw/reasonable%20adjustments%20guidance%20for%20schools/search/1> provides helpful practical examples of how the duties apply in schools and the site also has useful **template letters** for anyone needing to complain to schools about failure to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled pupil.

Disability Rights UK has a new handbook available containing in-depth guidance on a range of disability related subjects. There are also several advice sheets for young people who are planning to go to university. See their website for more information:

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/about-us>