

Wheelchair Policy

Date: March 2025

Review Date: March 2027

Principles

This policy is aimed at those pupils and staff who may use a wheelchair in their daily routine.

Wheelchairs are broadly divided into two types: manual and powered. Users of powered wheelchairs may also have the use of a manual wheelchair.

It is recommended that the parents of pupils at the school, or adults who work at the school, provide a chair that is maintained as 'fit for purpose' and managed with the health and safety of all in mind.

It is recommended that pupils who rely on a powered wheelchair for school purposes to have an alternative manual wheelchair for when their powered wheelchair is being serviced or unsuitable for a learning activity.

From whatever source the wheelchair is provided – the Wheelchair Service, privately funded or a charity – the responsibility for the regular servicing of a wheelchair and ensuring it is well maintained and 'fit for purpose' remains with the parents.

If the school has concerns about the safety of a wheelchair it reserves the right to ask parents to use a different chair whilst servicing is complete.

The school expects:

- That the wheelchair should be in good working order and regularly serviced by a competent qualified engineer.
- Brakes and other working parts should be regularly checked and maintained.
- If the wheelchair is a powered chair, the governors require that it is provided with a speed limitation built in for safety.
- In the case of mechanical breakdown or another problem which might make using the wheelchair unsafe, the school will support parents in making alternative arrangements.
- If the school has concerns about the mechanical workings of the wheelchair or its safety, then it will inform parents and the Wheelchair Service.

Guidelines

Students who independently operate their own powered wheelchairs will have had an assessment by their Occupational and/or Physiotherapist.

Students who independently operate their own manual chair will have had an assessment by their Occupational and/or Physiotherapist.

No-one, other than competent staff, will ever be allowed to operate a wheelchair in any form.

The school expects all staff to be competent in the basic use of the wheelchair. Competencies should cover:

- Empathy with the wheelchair user
- General health and safety awareness
- Use of the controls
- Use of the brakes – always making sure the brakes are on when the chair is not being pushed
- Make sure your passenger's feet are safely on the footplates and elbows, all clothing, rugs or bags are tucked in safely
- Look well ahead for possible hazards
- Avoid steep, soft or uneven surfaces as these will make it harder to push or could cause the chair to tip over
- Awareness of others and obstacles when manoeuvring – both in class and community

Staff should allow sufficient time to ensure that wheelchair users are safe when moving between locations.

Able bodied pupils should be made aware that:

- pupils in wheelchairs should be given additional space to manoeuvre around the school
- they should be vigilant when standing or sitting near to those using wheelchairs
- fire doors fitted with appliances to keep them open for wheelchair access, should be left open and not shut
- they should not touch the controls of any wheelchair or stand on or ride on the back of any wheelchair

Information regarding the awareness of wheelchair safety should be available to all via the Staff Handbook

Additional notes

Negotiating curbs

Whenever possible it is best to avoid curbs. Always try to use ramps or curb cuts on pavements. If this is unavoidable:

Pulling a wheelchair down a curb

It is safer to go down a curb backwards than forwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride. Care needs to be taken because you will be stepping backwards into the road.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.

2. Always tell the pupil, appropriately, what you are about to do.
3. Make sure the road is clear, and then back the wheelchair to the edge of the curb.
4. Pull the rear wheel carefully down onto the road surface, making sure that both wheels touch down at the same time.
5. When the front wheels are at the edge of the curb, pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forward on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair and the pupil on the rear wheel. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.
6. Carefully pull the wheelchair further back into the road and, when the pupil's feet are clear of the curb, gently lower the front to the road. Check that the road is clear before turning around and crossing.

Going down a steep slope

1. It is safer if the wheelchair can be guided down a steep slope backwards by a carer.

Pushing a wheelchair up a curb

It is safer to go up a curb forwards rather than backwards.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.
2. Always tell the pupil, appropriately, what you are going to do.
3. When the pupil's feet are nearly touching the curb, pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forwards on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair on the rear wheels.
4. When the front wheels are just clear of the curb, push the wheelchair forwards until the wheels rest on the pavement. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.
5. Push the wheelchair forwards until the back wheels just touch the curb and then lift up on the handles as you continue pushing forwards to place the rear wheels on the pavement.

Getting up and down stairs

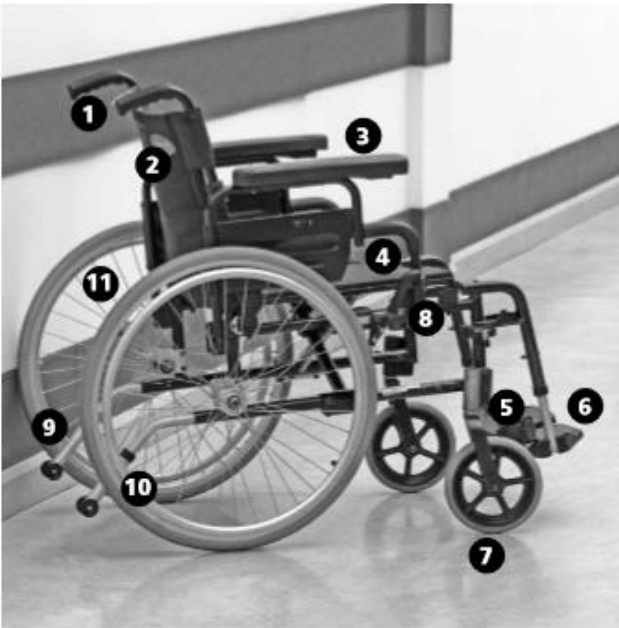
1. Never attempt to use stairs, or to lift a chair with the passenger in it.

An aide-memoir for the controls on powered wheelchairs will be made accessible to competent users.

Never hang bags or other material on the back of the wheelchair because this can make it unbalance and more liable to tip over backwards.

Chest restraints/harnesses must be used if fitted – they are to prevent any movement of the pupil that may lead to the chair being more liable to tipping over.

Ensure that the footplates and head support (where fitted) are always used.



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| 1. Pushing handles | 7. Front caster |
| 2. Backrest | 8. Brake lever |
| 3. Armrest | 9. Tipping lever |
| 4. Seat | 10. Hand rim |
| 5. Heel loops | 11. Rear self propelling wheel |
| 6. Footplate | |

In successfully completing this course the member of staff will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. Identify the main parts of a wheelchair, e.g. brakes, wheels, tyres, foot plates;
2. Speak to the student in the wheelchair directly showing awareness for their safety;
3. Move the chair with correct speed throughout the duration of the session, keeping the chair under control at all times;
4. Move the chair correctly in straight corridors and round corners and bends;
5. Engage and disengage the brakes correctly;
6. Show awareness of the dangers of obstructions, particularly those at low level;
7. Comply at all times with the school's own policy and guidelines for wheelchair pushing;
8. Control an occupied wheelchair over the following different obstacles: down the kerb, up the kerb, crossing grills, crossing raised surface areas and crossing angled or sloping surfaces.

Staff name:

Assessor's signature:

Date:

Course: Safe Wheelchair Use - Powered

In successfully completing this course the member of staff will have demonstrated the ability to:

1. Identify the main parts of a wheelchair, e.g. brakes, wheels, tyres, foot plates, control panel and it's functions;
2. Speak to the student in the wheelchair directly showing awareness for their safety;
3. Move the chair with correct speed throughout the duration of the session, keeping the chair under control at all times;
4. Move the chair correctly in straight corridors and round corners and bends;
5. Engage and disengage the brakes correctly;
6. Show awareness of the dangers of obstructions, particularly those at low level;
7. Comply at all times with the school's own policy and guidelines for wheelchair pushing;
8. Control an occupied wheelchair over the following different obstacles: down the kerb, up the kerb, crossing grills, crossing raised surface areas and crossing angled or sloping surfaces.
9. Complete a Risk Assessment for the individual pupil / student

Staff name:

Assessor's signature:

Date: