



## 3. Practising inclusive education

### 3.6 Accessing trips and out-of-school activities

## Introduction

In the process of including children and young people with spinal cord injuries, schools will often focus on physical access and other adjustments inside school walls. However, for many children and young people, accessing school trips and experiences outside of school is equally essential to how included they feel.

All students are entitled to inclusion in school trips. **The Equality Act** stipulates that schools must not discriminate in the way they afford pupils access to a benefit, facility or service, which includes school trips. Treating a pupil less favourably, or policies and practices that result in pupils with a particular characteristic being treated worse than other pupils, can be seen as direct or indirect discrimination.

Schools must make any reasonable adjustments to ensure there is no discrimination. Despite legislation, many disabled students and their families still report exclusion from out-of-school activities.

A 2008 report commissioned by Back Up on the school experiences of young people with spinal cord injuries revealed that the 'vast majority of young people and parents interviewed identified school trips as one of the most problematic areas of their mainstream school experience.'\*

The main barrier identified was lack of accessible transport. Some students reported being excluded from events altogether, and others attended events but had to take alternate transport in cabs or their parents' cars. Because school trips are often very social events, this separation was for them an isolating experience.

“ **With secondary school, I have to go in a black cab – it's not nice because you feel isolated, kind of thing. The others go in a school mini-bus, which isn't accessible. Black cabs aren't the most spacious of cars and I have to have a teaching assistant with me and sometimes I have a friend, but it's not the same. It's not being included in the whole group.**

Ali, 15\*

Others reported trips that were 'disasters' because the location and activity were inaccessible.

To ensure all students feel included in activities and trips out of school, the following strategies and suggestions may be useful:

**1** Commit to full inclusion of all young people in an activity so some are not separated from the others as much as possible, including transport or other physical elements of the trip.

**2** Recognise the devastating impact that exclusion from activities can have on a young person and their family and understand the importance of full participation in what is a valuable social event. Disabled children and young people may already be sensitive to being 'different' and being treated as such can be a particularly painful experience.

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**Inclusive education means to me as a parent of a disabled child that school trips would be thought out in advance, so that a wheelchair user like my son, would be able to access and get the most out of the trip just as somebody else who isn't in a wheelchair.**

Janet, mum of son 17

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**The trip to Hadrian's Wall – that was a bit of a disaster! Lots of hills, lots of places I couldn't go; the gift shop was up a flight of stairs.**

Ian, 16\*

**3** Choose events and venues that are accessible or can be adapted so all students can participate equally. Check access of catering and toilet facilities.

**4** Build up a register of accessible venues and transport providers, so that school can refer to it when planning trips.

**5** Select a destination that fits both the learning objectives and the needs of the group, rather than asking group members to fit the venue.

**6** Ensure careful planning that happens well in advance of the trip. Planning should include:

a. Risk assessments that involve any issues or requirements for the child or young person and identify solutions and necessary reasonable adjustments the school and staff should take.

b. Involving the child or young person to ensure the trip and transport meets their access requirements.

c. Involving parents and families as required to understand additional requirements and see they are adequately met.

d. Including access requirements are in all checklists, policy and paperwork that.

e. Accommodating any additional costs required for accessible transport within the budget for trips and activities.

f. Understanding any medical and health requirements and ensuring that appropriately trained staff are scheduled to attend.





## Additional resources include

- Equality and Human Rights Commission information on [school trips](#)
- [Inclusive Choice](#), organisation that offers training on 'inclusive school trips'

## Related news articles

- [‘Act poised to open trips to all’](#) – TES article about the impact of the Equality Act on school requirements to provide access to school trips
- [‘Why can’t I go too?’](#) - Guardian article about how disabled pupils in mainstream schools often find themselves excluded from school trips

## References

\*Knight, A, Petrie, P, Potts, P and Zuurmond, M. (2008) [The school lives of children and young people with a spinal cord injury](#). Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Report to Back Up.

**We are looking for examples of best inclusive practice in regards to school trips – please get in touch with us via the form on the toolkit homepage to share best practice examples.**