

# Cherry Tree Primary School and Nursery

(A member of the Berlesduna Academy Trust.)

Caring, Thriving, Preparing, Succeeding.



## Wheelchair Use in School Policy

Policy created	Spring 2016
Policy reviewed	Autumn 2025
Signed:	<i>M Davie</i>
Head of School:	Mr M Davie
This policy is due to be reviewed	Spring 2027

# Wheelchair Use in School Policy

## **Rationale**

This policy has been put in place due to a small, but increasing number of children requiring short term and long term use of wheelchairs in school. This policy has been based on information from the Specialist Teacher team and the Health and Safety Executive.

## **1. Manual Handling risk assessment for the movement of wheelchairs**

The movement of wheelchairs is subject to the Manual Handling Regulations 1992 and as such, appropriate risk assessments must be documented relating to their use. These should include reference to the potential risks of using a wheelchair (if applicable to our school) including:

- Pushing and pulling both empty and occupied wheelchairs;
- Assisting service users in or out of wheelchairs, to and from; vehicles, chairs, toilets, and as a result of falls.

Risk assessments should cover appropriate information, instruction and the need for specific training if required and be brought to the attention of all relevant staff.

## **2. Safety Checks of Wheelchairs**

At Cherry Tree Primary School and Nursery we expect that parents/carers will have carried out the following checks but we will monitor/support. The following basic safety checks should be made;

- Check that the brakes are in good working order;
- Check the wheels are free moving and secure and that tyres are suitably inflated;
- Check for splits in tyres;
- Check the stability of armrests, the backrest and the seat;
- Check footrests, ankle straps etc. where these are in place to ensure that they are in good working order and do not present an obstruction to the free movement of the wheelchair;
- Check that handles are secure and handle grips are in place;
- Check the security and condition of any accessories such as safety belts;
- In the case of electric wheelchairs, check the battery is secured in place and adequately charged.
- Check that the waist restraint straps are buckled safely when the chair is being transported or moved in any way to prevent them from falling down, trailing on the floor and causing a tripping hazard
- Ensure that the wheelchair is never pushed or pulled in the folded position – they must always be open no matter how short the travel distance.

These simple checks should form a standard part of any activity involving the movement of wheelchairs.

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If you have any concerns regarding the safety of any wheelchair, you should report these to the Assistant Headteacher - Inclusion Leader or Pastoral Leader initially and if appropriate, in consultation with the Occupational Therapist. The wheelchair should be taken out of use until a repair has been completed. If the wheelchair belongs to, or is on loan to, the person using the wheelchair, they (or their parents/carers if a young person) should be made aware of your concerns and you should give advice, if possible, on action to take i.e. not using the wheelchair, arranging for a service or repair etc.

### **3. Transportation of Wheelchairs**

Teachers and Learning Support Assistants may be involved in assisting students to and from a vehicle. However, staff will not assist the student in transport vehicles; this is the responsibility of the parents/carers or driver of the vehicle.

### **4. General Information about Wheelchair condition & maintenance** **Wheelchairs Owned by the Wheelchair user**

The condition and maintenance of wheelchairs owned by or on loan to the user is the responsibility of the individual user's parent/carer. The regular checks referred to above should be carried out by them each day the wheelchair is used.

Any faults or concerns identified should be brought to the attention of the user's parent/carer. Where appropriate, advice on action to take should be given to the user's parent/carer and this should be documented on a contact sheet. Staff must not carry out any activities using the wheelchair until confirmation has been received that it has been serviced, checked by a competent person or repaired.

### **Wheelchairs Provided by Health or other Similar Agency**

These are the responsibility of the provider and user. The regular checks referred to above should be carried out by them each day the wheelchair is used. 'Home chairs' are subject to external, termly checks. Wheelchairs which stay in school are checked regularly and an Occupational Therapist visits termly for a *main* check.

Any faults or concerns identified should be brought to the attention of the wheelchair user's parent/carer and the provider (if known). Where appropriate, advice on action to take should be given to the user's parent/carer or the provider and this should be documented on a contact sheet. Staff must not carry out any activities using the wheelchair until confirmation has been received that it has been serviced, checked by a competent person or repaired.

### **5. Issues to consider when moving or assisting a person to move in a wheelchair**

A risk assessment should be in place for moving or assisting a person to move in a wheelchair, this may be specific or generic depending upon the level and nature of

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the risk. Staff must familiarise themselves with the contents of the risk assessment prior to carrying out the task.

Staff must not undertake any activities which they consider to be beyond their own personal capabilities i.e. because of medical conditions, pregnancy, weight or nature of the service user, weight of equipment etc. They should report concerns to their line manager and Assistant Headteacher - Inclusion Leader or Pastoral Leader.

Clothing and footwear should be appropriate for the task, shoes should be flat soled with good grip and clothing should not be loose, to reduce the risk of it becoming entangled in working parts of the wheelchair or too tight to restrict movement.

Wherever possible, manufacturers' instructions should be readily available to anyone who may be required to undertake any activity involving use of the wheelchair. In addition, the manufacturer may specify checks which are relevant to a particular model of wheelchair and these should be carried out in addition to the points already noted above. For wheelchairs that are kept on-site, we have copies of the manufacturer's instructions. If you have any difficulties in completing these checks report this to the Assistant Headteacher - Inclusion Leader or Pastoral Leader.

Wheelchairs should not be positioned, stored or discarded in areas where they may pose a tripping hazard or impede access or egress in the event of an emergency.

### **Manual Handling Techniques**

Correct posture is important when undertaking any manual handling technique which includes pushing, pulling, lifting, carrying etc.:

- The natural curvature of the spine should be maintained at all times; ○ Knees should be bent if necessary allowing the thigh and buttock muscles to provide the power for the manoeuvre;
- The equipment, load etc. should be kept close to the body wherever possible;
  - Extension of the arms should be avoided if possible and a good firm grip is essential;
- Twisting of the body must be avoided as this puts added pressure on the spine;

Head and feet should face in the direction you are going. Tucking in the chin can improve posture particularly in the lower back.

Additional points to note when using a wheelchair:

- Staff and persons using a wheelchair should have a general awareness of others who may be in the area and who may be injured by wheelchairs.

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- When taking or using wheelchairs outdoors :-
  - Pay particular attention when moving up or down ramps, slopes, and kerb edges;
  - Be aware of external conditions i.e. ice, snow, rain and take appropriate action to ensure the continued safety of everyone concerned;
  - Plan routes, avoiding where possible uneven surfaces, steps, gravel, wet grass etc.;
  - Use appropriate exits, i.e. disabled access if possible;
  - Remove obstacles from doorways and porches.
- Do not carry bags and shopping on the back of wheelchairs as they may;
  - Fall off and pose a tripping hazard;
  - Impede anyone pushing the wheelchair;
  - Overload the wheelchair and cause it to topple over when unoccupied.

### Remember

- Make full use of brakes, footrests and seat/lap belts,
- Never exceed your own individual capability,
- Always consider the needs and comfort of the wheelchair user,
- Familiarise yourself with risk assessments relevant to the task/activity you are undertaking,
- Pay particular attention when negotiating to access and egress routes, □ Do not allow additional items to be carried on the back of wheelchairs, □ Seek assistance if necessary.

### Additional information for those handling a wheelchair

#### Kerbs

It is best to avoid kerbs whenever possible. Always try to use dropped kerbs or ramps. If you wish to negotiate kerbs unaided do not do it until you have had proper instructions. Ask your therapist, or an experienced wheelchair user, for help.

#### Pushing an occupied wheelchair down a kerb

It is safer to go down a kerb backwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride. Care needs to be taken though as you will be stepping backwards into the road.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.
2. Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
3. Make sure the road is clear then back the wheelchair to the edge of the kerb.
4. Pull the rear wheels carefully down onto the road making sure that both wheels touchdown at the same time.

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5. When the front castors are at the edge of the kerb, 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 and occupant on the rear wheels. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.
6. Carefully pull the wheelchair further back into the road and when the feet are clear of the kerb gently lower the front to the road.
7. Check that the road is clear before turning around and crossing.

### Pushing an occupied wheelchair up a kerb

It is safer to go up a kerb forwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.
2. Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
3. When the occupant's feet are nearly touching the kerb, 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 and occupant on the rear wheels.
4. When the front castors are just clear of the kerb, push the wheelchair forward until the castors rest on the pavement. Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.
5. Push the wheelchair forward until the back wheels just touch the kerb and then lift up on the handles as you continue pushing forwards to place the rear wheels on the pavement. The occupant can help with this stage by pushing forward on the hand rims.

**Appendix A** – 'Assisting people in wheelchairs' leaflet.

**Appendix B** – Risk Assessment form

**Appendix A**

**Assisting people in wheelchairs**

# Wheelchair Use in School Policy

## What is the problem?

The task of assisting people in wheelchairs has been associated with musculoskeletal injuries within the disability services industry.

## What are the risks?

Workers may be at risk of injuries to the back, neck, shoulders and wrists when assisting people in wheelchairs, particularly from pushing, pulling, bending and exerting high forces.

The common sources of risk include:

### Equipment

- Wheelchairs that are not maintained or poorly maintained (eg flat tyres, brakes not working, loose wheels, castors and damaged upholstery/frame).
- Wheelchairs that are not suitable for the client and/or environment.
- Repairs and modifications conducted by unauthorised or unqualified people.
- Failure to charge electric batteries.

### Task

- Effort involved in pushing the combined weight of the wheelchair and client.
- Pushing wheelchairs long distances.
- Transferring people in/out of wheelchairs.
- Pushing an electric wheelchair in free wheel mode.
- Driving electric wheelchairs when using attendant controls.

### Environment

- Soft floor surfaces such as deep pile carpets, rugs, lino with soft underlay.
- Inadequate space to manoeuvre wheelchairs.
- Pushing wheelchairs over steep or uneven surfaces (eg grass, gravel, curbs, ramps).
- Controlling wheelchairs up and down ramps.
- Inadequate information about wheelchair accessibility.

## What are solutions to the problem?

Implement a system to inspect and review the workplace and equipment, and identify any changes in the individual's needs.

If changes have been made or need to be made, employers should complete a re-assessment of the worker's tasks and environment.

Fix any safety issues as soon as possible so the worker's and client's needs are safely met.

The risk of injury can be eliminated or reduced by the following safety measures:

### Equipment

- Involve workers in assessment and selection of a wheelchair in relation to:
  - the client's needs
  - worker safety
  - environment where wheelchair will be used
  - ease of operation for client and workers
  - need for attendant controls on electric wheelchairs.
- Regularly maintain and inspect wheelchairs (eg checks on tyre pressure, brakes, controls, tyre wear, fabric/structure, charging point and battery condition). If the wheelchair is client owned, include this requirement in the service agreement.

### Task

- Develop procedures to identify the safest movement of the wheelchair and client.
- Provide workers with training in the use of wheelchairs including:
  - going up and down curbs, controlling on slopes, managing small lips of ramps, turning
  - practical supervised training exercises at a range of community locations (cafes, train stations, cinema)
  - information provided by manufacturer and/or supplier if available.

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## Environment

- Assess floor surfaces for minimal friction to assist ease of movement. Where necessary, modify existing flooring.
- Provide adequate space to manoeuvre (eg appropriate door widths).
- Develop and implement a system so if changes are made to the home or environment, the organisation providing the support is notified (eg installation or removal of a portable ramp, home renovation).
- Conduct a pre-visit assessment of accessibility before engaging in community-based activities.
- Avoid sand, loose stone or dirt paths when using indoor wheelchairs.

## The problem



Pushing wheelchairs over steep, uneven or soft surfaces can put the worker at risk of injury to the back, neck and shoulders.

## A solution



Outdoors, avoid sand, loose dirt, dirt paths when using indoor wheelchairs. Indoors, avoid thick pile carpet and rugs and lino with soft underlay.

**Appendix B**

<b>Wheelchair Risk Assessment for _____ at Cherry Tree Primary School and Nursery</b>
<b>Nature of difficulties:</b>

<b>PLAYGROUND</b>	<b>CORRIDOR</b>	<b>CLASSROOM</b>	<b>HALL</b>
<u>Identified risks</u>	<u>Identified risks</u>	<u>Identified risks</u>	<u>Identified risks</u>
<u>Action taken</u>	<u>Action taken</u>	<u>Action taken</u>	<u>Action taken</u>

\*During emergency evacuation \_\_\_\_\_ will leave the area last with adult supervision

Signed: ..... Role: ..... Date completed: .....

Signed: ..... Role: ..... Review date: .....