BIRDS OF PARADISE THEATRE COMPANY

Guide to doing An Access Audit for your school

There are lots of people who visit your school for lots of different reasons. An Access Audit is a way of identifying some things that might stop or make it difficult for people to visit or attend your school.

As a starting point you can think about the sorts of **barriers** that people might experience and the sort of **access requirements** people may have.

What is a barrier?

A barrier is something that a person might come across that affects their ability to use or do something. For instance:

- Steps stopping a wheelchair user
- Small print being hard to read if you are partially sighted
- Lack of clear information confusing you
- A noisy room make it hard to hear and concentrate
- Lack of a hearing loop creating a barrier to people using hearing aids

Barriers can be practical things as listed above but they can also be about how a person is treated. We call these **attitudinal barriers**.

While we can't remove every barrier for every person we can take away major ones and make the world around us more accessible and fair.

What is an access requirement?

An access requirement is what an individual person needs to make things more accessible to them. As everyone is different this is different for every person. For instance, not everyone who is blind reads Braille. It is important NOT to make **assumptions** about what a person needs to meet their access requirements – we should always ask.

TOP TIP – Use Rob and Sal from the show as examples. What are their access requirements and what barriers might they experience?

	Medical condition	Access Requirements	Barriers
Rob	Cerebral Palsy	Wheelchair user and requires level access. Accessible parking	Steps and lack of level access.

		space. Can transfer to a seat.	Attitude – people speaking to people with Rob and not to him.
Sal	Microphthalmos and Coloboma	Blind and requires information emailed as text docs for screen readers. A personal assistant to support in work situations.	New environments. People being unhelpful and not supportive. Lack of information. Obstacles.

TOP TIP – notice how knowing what someone's medical condition is does not help you know anything about making things more accessible for them! If you are interested in those medical words maybe you could be interested in being a doctor?

How do we get started with our Access Audit?

There are lots of different ways you can do this. Here are two suggestions about methods you might like to try:

1. **Pick an area of your school or an activity** and think it through from the point of view of someone with a particular access requirement – for instance you could think about a wheelchair user like Rob who requires level access, someone who is partially sighted or someone with only minimal light sensitivity like Sal. Or it could be someone who is easily distracted, and needs time to process new information and a quite space.

2. **Pick a particular access requirement** and travel through the school imagining you are a visitor – maybe coming to a fair or event – what barriers can you find?

In both cases, what **ideas** do you have to remove barriers and make things more accessible? Maybe you discover a wheelchair user has to use a different route and a ramp at a certain point could be more accessible? Or that there are not enough accessible signs explaining where to go.

TOP TIP – you might know someone with access requirements and you can imagine them coming to your school or you could think of a character from a

tv show or film who has access requirements – what would their experience be?

TOP TIP – remember making your school or any environment more accessible is not just about the building it is about people and how they behave – how should we encourage a positive environment for people with access requirements?

If you feel like you don't know enough about the experience of being disabled and access requirements:

If you would like to do an audit but feel really stuck and unsure you can watch a video on the BOP website about this or maybe there is someone with access requirements you could invite to talk about what makes things better for them?

Here are a few more starting points for doing an access audit in your school:

Routes and Entrances
- Is the Main School entrance easy to find?
- Is this entrance busy?
- Is there signage? Is there picture signage? Braille Signage? Tactile Signage?

Receptions, Counters and Desks
- Who do people meet when they arrive?
- Is the Reception/desk/counter/checkout suitable for approach and use from both sides by people either standing and seated?
- Is there an Induction loop fitted?

Corridors (Horizontal Circulation)
- Is the corridor wide enough for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and for other people to pass?
- Are the colours, tones and textures varied to help people distinguish between surfaces and fixtures and fittings? Do the floors suitably colour contrast against the walls?
- Are the corridors busier at certain times?

Stairs, Ramps & Lifts (Vertical Circulation)
- Do all the stairs have handrails at a suitable height?
- Is there a lift to access all floors?

- In a lift are the controls, including emergency call, located easily using visual or tactile information and within easy reach of all users?

Toilet Provision
- Is there an accessible toilet on every floor?
- Is there plenty of space to manoeuvre in the toilet?
- Is there a red cord alarm, does it reach the floor?

Seating and Waiting Areas
- Are seats provided at intervals along long internal routes or where waiting is likely?
- Are seats stable, with armrests and provided in a range of heights?
- Is there space for wheelchair users to pull up alongside a seated companion?

Wayfinding, Information and Signage
- Is it easy to find your way around the school?
- Is there signage available in Braille and tactile?
- Are the toilets easy to find?

Lighting, acoustics and alarms
- Is it possible to change the lighting states in spaces?
- Is there a designated quiet space in the school?
- If there is an alarm is there a visual and audible signal?

What else?
- Are there any spaces that you can't get to in your school?
- What about teacher only spaces, like a staff room, are they accessible?
- What haven't we covered?

Through this audit you might have discovered some barriers that make it more difficult for some people to access your school. What might you do next to remove some of those barriers?

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*This guide is a pilot of school resource material to accompany the digital tour of The Super Special Disability Roadshow. We welcome feedback and input to help us create the final resources that will accompany the work. Please feel free to contact us at all@boptheatre.co.uk