

Barrier Free Guidelines for CWSN in SSA

Barrier Free Access (BFA) refers to universal access for all children and adults within the schools. This should not be limited only to buildings and physical infrastructure, but also extend itself to curriculum and teaching learning processes. This is particularly relevant in the context of children with special needs because they have variety of learning needs which need to be addressed.

General guidelines for BFA

General guidelines will include ***access to the physical environment*** as well as ***access to the curriculum and the teaching environment***. Whereas the access to the physical environment mainly takes care of the children with orthopaedic impairment as well as visual impairment, access to the curriculum and teaching learning environment is particularly important for children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectually challenged, children with cerebral palsy and children with multiple disabilities.

Some Children with Special Needs (CWSN) might have one predominant disability with associated difficulties. In such cases, please refer to guidelines given under the appropriate disability.

Access to physical environment

- The path from the gate to the school buildings and playground must be clear, levelled
- All entrances and doorways in the school buildings should be between minimum 4' to 5' feet wide.
- The toilet inside the school should be accessible to CWSN. This toilet should be fitted with commode and grab-rails.
- The drinking water outlet should be accessible to CWSN also
- Avoid sharp turns in the walkways.
- The walkway must be clear of any hung and protruding obstructions such as windows, lights, low branches, flower pots and sign posts etc.
- A handrail should be provided at any dangerous point in the walkway. Guard rails and kerbs are a must in situations where there is a sudden change in the level of height including stairs and verandah.
- The ends of the handrails should be bent downwards to avoid injury.
- Steps should be of equal and even heights.
- Bright colours (preferably yellow) should be used at every change in slope, at the beginning and ending of a staircase for easy recognition.
- All signages should be in print, visuals and Braille at the readable height (min 3 ft) of the children.
- All the surfaces should be non-slip, and loose gravel or cobbles should be avoided.

- Natural lighting should be optimized. There should be enough windows to allow adequate ventilation and lighting.
- Safety of all children should be ensured by provision of hazard free environment (broken window panes, broken steps, broken fixture and furniture, unsafe ceilings, etc).
- The school/ classroom design should allow the teacher to be able to pay personal attention to the child, including effective positioning and placement, keeping in mind the individual needs of CWSN.

Access to curriculum/ teaching learning processes

- Adaptation and accommodations needs to be made in procedures for assessment, use of teaching strategies including signs & gestures and use of teaching learning material as per the needs of varied needs of CWSN
- Availability and accessibility to teaching learning material within the class rooms to be ensured
- Ensure participation of CWSN in all curricular and co-curricular activities.
- Use of peer support effectively to ensure increased participation of CWSN in schools.
- Use of enabling technologies to meet the needs of CWSN.

Category Specific Guidelines for BFA

Guidelines for children with Moving Difficulties and Cerebral Palsy

- Ensure wheel chair accessibility to classrooms, toilets, office rooms, playground, etc
- The prescribed gradient of the ramp- 1:12 should be strictly adhered to and all ramps should be fitted with handrails.
- Aids and appliances like- callipers, wheel chairs, braces, special chairs, crutches, wedges, pencil grips, communication boards, etc. should be made available.
- Ensure adequate space allocation to meet individual needs of children using assistive devices
- Ensure proper positioning and safe/careful handling of children with cerebral palsy, with the help of the resource teacher/ parent
- All classes and teaching facilities for these children should be provided on the ground floor.
- Arrange for a suitable writer for children with writing difficulties.
- Ensure enough response time to children with cerebral palsy. This is important as they might have communication and speech problems.

Guidelines for children with Intellectual Difficulties (children with mental retardation)

Since this section mainly focuses on adaptation in teaching learning processes, the following need to be emphasised:

- Ensure that visual, tactile and pictorial learning aids are available and accessible.
- Level of difficulty of both language and content need to be adapted as per the comprehension level of the child.
- Use of concrete objects as TLM, needs to be emphasised.
- Give enough time for individualised teaching learning opportunities.
- Based on the child's level of understanding, the content and evaluation should be adapted. (For example- numbers of concepts taught could be reduced if required; questions could mainly be multiple choices/ fill in the blanks, etc).

Guidelines for children with Hearing Difficulties

Since language and communication is the major barrier for this group of children, the following needs to be emphasised:

- Provision of suitable hearing aids and their maintenance should be ensured.
- The resource teacher should provide auditory training to make optimum use of the residual hearing of the child.
- Seating of the child should be such that s/he gets a clear view of teacher's face (for lip reading) as well as the black board.
- Ensure increased use of pictorial teaching learning materials.
- Level of difficulty of language needs to be adapted as per the comprehension level of the child.
- Ensure use of Indian Sign Language with the help of the resource teacher, if required.
- Children with language acquisition problems should be exempted from the 3-language formula. Sign Language can be used as an option.
- Sign language can be given as an option under co-curricular activity to enhance peer support.
- Assessment procedures may include objective type questions, instead of essay type questions for children with difficulties in language acquisition.
- Extra response time needs to be provided, wherever necessary
- Children with language difficulties should be exposed to language acquisition and reading softwares.

Guidelines for children with Seeing Difficulties

- Ensure availability of accessible teaching learning material (Braille, large print, audio, e-text, etc).
- Making science labs accessible by Braille labelling, tactile charts/ diagram.
- Ensure increased use of verbal instructions/ directions while teaching.
- Ensure availability and use of embossed and tactile TLM (maps, globes, charts, models, diagrams, etc).
- Availability, training and use of aids and appliances (Braille, Taylor frame, white cane, abacus, low vision aids, magnifiers, etc) should be ensured.
- Availability and training in screen- reading and scanning softwares should be done.
- Training in daily living skills, orientation & mobility (like- human guide technique) must be provided to children with seeing difficulties, as per the needs.
- Ensure effective orientation of children with seeing difficulties in school environment with active involvement of peers.
- Proper training to be imparted to children with low vision in making optimum use of residual vision with the help of resource teacher.
- The school environment including the walkways should be safe and free of all obstructions.
- Warning strips/ textures to be provided before the beginning of steps/ kerbs etc so that children with visual impairment do not have an accidental fall.
- Seating of a child with low vision should be such that s/he gets a clear view of teacher's face as well as the black board.

Guidelines for children with Multiple Disabilities

- Availability, training and use of appropriate aids and appliances should be ensured.
- Access to communication and information in the required language through interpreters, electronic devices, etc. should be ensured.
- Information to be provided in appropriate format (Braille, sign language, e-text, large print, tactile, audio-visual, etc).
- Teaching needs to be more application oriented, experiential and practical for this group of children.
- Training in mobility and daily living skills should be provided with support of resource teacher/ parents/ peers
- Effective use of peer support to enhance communication and mobility skills
- Use of appropriate technology, technological aids and software, like PacMate for deaf-blind, should be encouraged.

Note:

These are just guidelines for the States to help them develop some mechanism to provide barrier free access to children with special needs. However, these may be adapted/ modified according to the individual needs of the child.