

**Equality and
Diversity Policy**

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**Equality and Diversity Policy**

We actively promote inclusion, equality of opportunity and value diversity. All early year’s settings must consider and meet relevant employer and service provider duties as set out in the Equality Act (2010). Those in receipt of funding also have public equality duties to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, foster good relations with individuals and groups with protected characteristics, namely disability, race (ethnicity), religion and belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership. Settings also have obligations under the Prevent Duty (2015) which highlights the need to foster equality and prevent children from being drawn into harm and radicalisation.

**Aim:** Our provision actively promotes inclusion, equality of opportunity and the valuing of diversity.

###### Objectives

We support the definition of inclusion as stated by the Early Childhood Forum: *Inclusion is the process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging.*

We interpret this as consisting of several tasks and processes in relation, not only to children but also to parents and visitors in the setting. These tasks and processes include awareness and knowledge of relevant barriers to inclusion for those with a protected characteristic namely:

* disability
* gender reassignment
* pregnancy and maternity
* race
* religion or belief
* sexual orientation
* sex (gender)
* age
* marriage or civil partnership (in relation to employment)

This includes unlawful behaviour towards people with protected characteristics. Unlawful behaviour being direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, associative discrimination, discrimination by perception, harassment, and victimisation (in addition, we are aware of the inequality that users facing socio-economic disadvantaged may also encounter). We will not tolerate behaviour from an adult which demonstrates dislike and prejudice towards groups and individuals living outside the UK (xenophobia). This also applies to the same behaviour towards specific groups of people and individuals who are British Citizens residing in the UK.

**Staff Training**

We promote understanding of discrimination through specific and annual training and staff development. This training includes:

* The causes and effects of discrimination on both adults and children.
* The long- term impact of discrimination.
* The need to protect children from discrimination and ensure that childcare practice is both accessible and inclusive.
* The need for relevant support to allow children to develop into confident adults with a strong positive self-identity.

**Equality and Diversity in our Provision**

Promoting identity, positive self-concept, and self-esteem for all children through treating each child as an individual and with equal concern. Ensuring each child’s developmental and emotional needs are recognised and met. This is achieved through:

* Promoting inclusive practice to ensure every child is welcomed and valued.
* Discussing aspects of family/child identity with parents when settling in a new child.
* Understanding, supporting and promoting the importance of identity for all children and recognising that this comprises multiple facets which are shaped by a ‘kaleidoscope’ of factors including British values, ‘race’\ethnicity and culture, gender, difference of ability, social class, language, religion and belief, and family form and lifestyle, which combine uniquely in the identity of each individual; for example, we promote gender equality while at the same time recognising the differences in play preferences and developmental timetables of girls and boys.
* Recognising that this ‘kaleidoscope’ also reflects negative images which may be internalised and negatively affect the development of self-concept, self-esteem, and confidence.
* Promoting a welcoming atmosphere that genuinely appreciate British values, different cultural and personal perspectives, without stereotyping and prejudice cultures and traditions on raising children, by always involving parents.
* Promoting community cohesion and creating an environment that pre-empts acts of discrimination so that they do not arise.
* Recruitment of staff to reflect cultural and language diversity, disabled staff, and staff of both genders.
* Addressing discrimination as it occurs from children in a sensitive, age-appropriate manner to ensure that everyone involved understands the situation and are offered reassurance and support to achieve resolution.
* Challenging discriminatory behaviour from parents, staff or outside agencies or individuals that affect the well-being of children and the early years community.
* Ensuring that practitioners work closely with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator to make sure that the additional needs of all children are identified and met.
* Maintaining a positive non-judgemental attitude and use of language with children to talk about topics such as family composition/background, eye and skin colour, hair texture, sex, gender, physical attributes and languages spoken (including signing).
* Becoming knowledgeable about different cultures, and individual subjective perceptions of these and being able to reflect them imaginatively and creatively in the setting to create pride, interest and positive self-identity.
* Discussing similarities and differences positively without bias and judgement.
* Celebrating festivals, holy days, and special days authentically through involving parents, staff or the wider community to provide a positive experience for all.
* Providing books with positive images of children and families from all backgrounds and abilities. Avoiding caricatures or cartoon-like depictions, and ensuring individual differences are portrayed with sensitive accuracy. The central characters in individual stories should provide a positive, broad representation of diversity e.g. disability, ethnicity, sex and gender, age, and social backgrounds. Individual storylines should contain a range of situations which are easily identifiable by children such as those that include disabled children/adults, different ethnic groups, mixed heritage families, gender diversity, single sex/same and different sex families, multi-generational households, and cultural diversity.

**Fostering positive attitudes and challenging discrimination**

* Young children are learning how to grow up in a diverse world and develop appropriate attitudes. This can be difficult, and they may make mistakes and pick up inappropriate attitudes or just get the ‘wrong idea’ that may underlie attitudes of ‘pre-prejudice’ towards specific individuals/groups. Where children make remarks or behave in a discriminatory or prejudice way or make inappropriate comments that arise from not knowing facts, staff should explain why these actions are not acceptable and provide appropriate information and intervention to reinforce children’s understanding and learning.
* Where children make overtly prejudice or discriminatory remarks they are dealt with as above, and the issue is raised with the parents.
* When children wish to explore aspects of their identity such as ethnicity or gender, they should be listened to in an understanding and non-judgemental way.
* Parents are expected to abide by the policy for inclusion, diversity, and equality and to support their child in the aims of the setting.

**Implementing an equality strategy to foster a ‘can do’ approach.**

* An equality check and access audit are completed on registration to ensure that barriers to inclusion are identified, removed, or minimised wherever possible, for children, families, and visitors to the setting.
* Early years settings in receipt of nursery education funding are covered by the public sector equality duty. These bodies must have regard of the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations between disabled and non-disabled persons, and publish information to show their compliance with the duty. Please see our *Equality Objectives* for more information.

**Promoting dynamic and balanced mixed gender, culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse staff teams who work constructively together in providing for diverse communities.**

* It is recognised that members of staff in diverse teams bring a range of views and opinions to the setting regarding a range of issues to do with the job. It is important that a range of views and perspectives are shared and respected in staff meetings and that decisions are made on which way of looking at the situation will result in the best outcomes for the child.
* Staff views are sought where these offer individuals, social and/or cultural insight, although staff should not be put in an uncomfortable position of being an ‘expert’ or ‘ambassador’.
* Staff respect similarities and differences between each other and users such as ability, disability, religious and personal beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment etc. Staff do not discriminate or harass individuals on the grounds of these or encourage any other member of staff to do so; evidence of such will be dealt with by management immediately.
* Members of staff make the best use of different perspectives in the team to find solutions to difficult problems that arise in socially/culturally complex situations.
* Members of staff support each other to highlight similarities and respect differences.
* Members of staff of both sexes carry out all tasks according to their job description; there are no jobs that are designated men’s or women’s jobs.
* Staff are sensitive to the fact that male workers are under-represented in the early years workforce so may be more likely to experience inequality and discrimination.
* Staff should be aware that male workers may be more vulnerable to allegations. Therefore, work practices should be developed to minimise this. These practices are valuable for all staff.
* Where staff may feel threatened, or under attack, from discriminatory behaviour, staff and managers follow the *Health and Safety Policy* which contains specific information on *Threats and abuse towards staff and volunteers.*
* There is an ethos wherein staff, parents and children are free to express themselves and speak their own languages in ways that enhance the culture of the setting.

**Ensuring that barriers to equality and inclusion are identified and removed or minimised.**

Barriers may include:

* Lack of understanding, where the language spoken at the setting is not the same as at home.
* Physical barriers, where there are environmental features which stop a disabled child or disabled parent accessing the setting.
* Negative attitudes, stereotypes or prejudices are present.
* Poor commitment from staff and managers to the time and energy required to identify and remove barriers to accessibility.
* Unconscious and conscious bias of staff towards some families such as those from other backgrounds, disabled parents, same sex parents and families with specific religious beliefs.
* Gendered views of staff which limit children’s aspirations and choices.
* Misconceptions about ability or access not based on medical advice or scientific evidence e.g. children with accessibility needs not attending a setting due to a unestablished, heightened risk to their health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Lack of effective Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the homes of families who are vulnerable or at risk and therefore unable to keep in close contact with the childcare provider.

We ensure that all staff are aware of the different barriers to inclusion and equality and consider the wider implications for children and their families, by completing appropriate annual training.

**Supporting children to become considerate adults.**

Children’s social and emotional development is shaped by early experiences and relationships and incorporates elements of equality and British and Universal values. The EYFS curriculum supports children’s earliest skills in an age-appropriate way to:

* Become social citizens.
* Be able to listen and attend to instructions.
* Know the difference between right and wrong.
* Recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others.
* Make and maintain friendships.
* Develop empathy and consideration of other people.
* Take turns in play and conversation.
* Develop appropriate risk-taking behaviours.
* Understand rules and boundaries and how to regulate their own behaviour.
* Not hurt or upset other people with words and actions.
* Understand the consequences of hurtful and discriminatory behaviour.

**British values**

The fundamental British values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs are already implicitly embedded in the EYFS curriculum.

Democracy: making decisions together.

* For self-confidence and self-awareness (PSED), practitioners encourage children to see the bigger picture, children know their views count, value each other’s views and values and talk about feelings e.g. when they do or do not need help.
* Supporting the decisions children make and providing activities that involve turn-taking, sharing and collaboration. Children are given opportunities to develop enquiring minds, where questions are valued and prejudice attitudes less likely.

Rule of law**:** understanding rules matter (PSED)

* Practitioners ensure children understand their and others’ behaviour and consequence.

Individual liberty:freedom for all (PSED & UW)

* Children should develop a positive sense of themselves. Staff provide opportunities for children to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and increase their confidence in their own abilities, for example through allowing children to take risks on an obstacle course, mixing colours, exploring facets of their own identity, talking about their experiences and learning. Practitioners encourage a range of experiences, allow children to explore the language of feelings and responsibility, reflect on differences and understand we are free to have different opinions, for example in a small group discussing what they feel about transferring into Reception Class.

Mutual respect and tolerance: treat others as you want to be treated (PSED & UW)

* Staff create an ethos of inclusivity and tolerance where views, faiths, cultures and races are valued, and children are engaged with the wider community.
* Children should acquire tolerance, appreciation, and respect for their own and other cultures; know about similarities and differences between themselves, others and among families, faiths, communities, cultures, and traditions.
* Staff encourage and explain the importance of tolerant behaviours such as sharing and respecting others’ opinions.
* Staff promote diverse attitudes and challenge stereotypes, for example, sharing stories that reflect and value the diversity of children’s experiences and providing resources and activities that challenge gender, cultural/racial stereotyping.

**It is not acceptable to:**

* Actively promote intolerance of other faiths, cultures, and races.
* Fail to challenge gender stereotypes and routinely segregate girls and boys.
* Isolate children from their wider community.
* Fail to challenge behaviours (whether of staff, children, or parents) that are not in line with the fundamental values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.

**Legal References**

General Data Protection Regulation 2018

Children and Families Act 2014 Part 3

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2014

Disability Equality Duty 2011

Equality Act 2010 and Amendment Regulations 2023

Prevent Strategy 2023

**Further guidance**

Further guidance about The Equality Act and Good Practice can be found at the *Preschool Early Years Alliance 2015.*