5. Promoting Inclusion, Equality and Valuing Diversity

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5.1 Promoting Inclusion, Equality and Valuing Diversity

Policy statement

All early years providers must meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Providers must eliminate unlawful discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination by association or perception, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination arising from disability. They must also make reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility and inclusion. This duty is anticipatory, requiring providers to consider and address potential barriers in advance.

Providers must advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations, and promote inclusion for people with the protected characteristics of:

- Disability
- Race (including ethnicity)
- Religion or belief
- Sex (gender)
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership (in relation to employment)

Providers also have obligations under the Prevent Duty (2015, updated 2023) which highlights the need to foster equality and prevent children from being drawn into harm and radicalisation.

Aim

The Fledgelings Preschool actively promotes inclusion, equality of opportunity and the valuing of diversity. We are committed to embedding a culture of inclusion, equality and diversity in everything we do, ensuring that everyone feels respected, valued and welcomed, and has equitable opportunities to develop and thrive.

Objectives

We support the Early Childhood Forum definition of inclusion:

"Inclusion is the process of identifying, understanding and breaking down the barriers to participation and belonging."

We apply this principle to children, families, visitors and staff by identifying and removing barriers that may affect participation, wellbeing and belonging.

We recognise and challenge unlawful behaviour, including direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination by association or perception, harassment and victimisation. We also acknowledge the additional inequalities that may be experienced by those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

We do not tolerate prejudice, discrimination or xenophobic behaviour towards any individual or group, whether from within or outside the UK.

Through training and professional development, we support staff to understand:

- The causes and impact of discrimination.
- The long-term effects of discrimination on children and adults.
- Their responsibility to provide accessible, inclusive practice.
- The importance of supporting positive identity, confidence and self-esteem.

Our Practice

The Fledgelings Preschool promotes inclusion and equality by:

Partnership with families

- Encouraging families to share information about themselves, their culture, what is important to them and any barriers they may experience.
- Offering flexible opportunities for families to contribute and participate and reducing communication barriers.
- Respecting different cultural perspectives and parenting practices while working in partnership with parents and carers.
- Working in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals to ensure children with additional needs and disabilities are supported, and that practice is developmentally appropriate and inclusive.

Training and professional development for staff

- Recognising colleagues lived experience and encouraging them to share their own experiences and knowledge.

- Accessing training and supporting staff to work confidently within a culturally diverse community and to challenge practices that are not in a child's best interests.
- Using induction, supervision, and reflective practice to review inclusive practice, challenge assumptions, and agree on actions to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Using recruitment practices that aim to ensure a workforce that reflects cultural and linguistic diversity, includes individuals with disabilities, and is representative of all genders

Creating an inclusive environment and removing barriers to access

- Recognising and valuing the multiple factors that shape individual identity, including culture, ethnicity, language, religion, belief, gender, disability, family structure, socio-economic background and life experiences.
- Welcoming all children and families and not discriminating against any group or individual with regard to admissions, attendance, participation or access to support.
- Identifying, removing or minimising barriers to participation wherever possible, reviewing any adjustments made with families and staff regularly
- Challenging stereotypes and supporting positive self-esteem and self-concept by ensuring that children and families can see themselves positively reflected in the environment and resources.
- Promoting bilingualism, multilingualism and alternative communication methods.

Inclusive, play based curriculum and resources

- Creating an accessible, developmentally appropriate environment and play based experiences that reflect and celebrate the diversity of children, families and communities.
- Embedding actively anti-racist practice by challenging stereotypes, avoiding tokenism, and ensuring that representations of race and culture are accurate, respectful and celebratory.
- Planning for each child or young person as an individual, taking account of their interests, abilities, communication, home language(s), culture, family structure and lived experience.
- Overcoming gender stereotypes by promoting gender-equal play, using inclusive language, and auditing resources for bias.
- Supporting children to develop a positive self-image and a sense of belonging through personal, social and emotional development experiences, and through respectful conversations about similarity and differences in age-appropriate ways.
- Reviewing resources regularly and removing or adapting any materials that promote bias, stereotypes, or exclusion.

Responding to discrimination, bias and exclusion

- Not tolerating discriminatory behaviour, language, harassment, or victimisation from anyone, including staff, parents, visitors and external agencies within our setting or services.
- Addressing discriminatory behaviour from children in a sensitive, age-appropriate manner.
- Supporting children, families and staff involved in understanding the impact of what has happened, repairing relationships, and feeling safe and included.
- Using equality and anti-discrimination legislation to support children, families and staff who may experience prejudice or discrimination.

Monitoring, reviewing and working to continuously improve

- Regularly monitoring and reviewing our practice and environment through audits, action plans and evaluation processes to ensure equality, accessibility and inclusion remain embedded in all aspects of provision.
- Seeking regular feedback from children, parents/carers and staff to understand whether people feel respected, valued and welcomed and whether any barriers to access remain.

Legal Framework

- Early Years Foundation Stage
- Equality Act 2010

5.2 Equality procedures and practices

At the Fledgelings Preschool we promote 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.

- Promoting inclusive practice to ensure every child is welcomed and valued.
- Discussing aspects of family/child identity with parents/carers when settling in a new child.
- 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 families, 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 and demonstrate cultural diversity.
- Providing visual materials, such as posters and pictures that provide non-stereotypical images of people, places and cultures and roles that are within children's range of experience.
- Ensuring toys, learning materials and resources reflect diversity and provide relevant materials for exploring aspects of difference, such as skin tone paints and pens.
- Developing a range of activities through which children can explore aspects of their identity, explore similarities, differences and develop empathy including:
    - self-portraits, photograph albums and displays showing a range of families
    - books about 'me' or my family
    - persona doll stories which sympathetically and authentically represent diversity
    - food activities, such as tasting and cooking, creating real menu additions
    - activities about real celebrations such as new babies, weddings, cultural and religious events

- developing a music area with a variety of musical instruments for children to use to create a range of music.
- home corner play which encourages all children to equally participate and provides domestic articles from diverse cultures
- 'dressing up' materials which promote non-gendered roles
- providing dolls that sensitively and accurately portray difference such as disability and ethnicity
- use of a variety of music to play to children of different genres and cultural styles with a variety of musical instruments for children to access
- a language and literacy area with a variety of books, some with dual language texts and signs, involving parents in the translation where possible
- examples of writing in other scripts from everyday sources such as papers and magazines, packaging etc. children's names written on cards in English as well as in their home language script where appropriate
- conversations with young children which explore unfamiliar objects and subjects to help foster an understanding of diversity and identity such as spectacles or hearing aids, religious and cultural practices

- Record keeping that refers to children's emerging bilingual skills or their use of sign language as achievements in positive terms.
- Record keeping that refers to children's differing abilities and identities in positive terms.
- Records that show the relevant involvement of all children, especially children with special educational needs and disabilities, those using English as an additional language and more able learners in the planning of their care and education.

At the Fledgelings Preschool we foster positive attitudes and challenge 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/carers.
- When children wish to explore aspects of their identity, they should be listened to in an understanding and non-judgemental way.

- Parents/carers are expected to abide by the policy for inclusion, diversity and equality and to support their child in the aims of the setting.

At the Fledgelings Preschool we implement an equality strategy to foster a 'can do' approach

- We have an equality strategy in place outlining our vision on equality alongside list of actions summarising how to build equality into the provision and how this is monitored and evaluated.
- Early years providers 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.

At the Fledgelings Preschool we promote dynamic and balanced 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 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.
- There is an ethos wherein staff, parents/carers and children are free to express themselves and speak their own languages in ways that enhance the culture of the setting.

At the Fledgelings Preschool we ensure that barriers to equality and inclusion are identified and removed or minimised wherever possible.

- Barriers may include:

- lack of understanding - where the language spoken at the setting is not that which is spoken at a child's home
- perceived barriers – affordability where parents/carers are not aware of financial support available or assume that a service is not available to them. Perceived barriers may also be

physical barriers for those children or parents/carers with a disability or additional needs where they assume, they will not be able to access the service

- physical barriers – where there are environmental features which stop a disabled child or disabled parent/carers accessing the setting such as stairs
- negative attitudes – stereotypes and prejudices or commitment by 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, parents/carers, with disabilities same sex parents/carers and families with specific religious beliefs
- gendered views of staff which limit children's aspirations and choices
- misconceptions such as children with disabilities should not attend settings during a public health emergency due to a perceived heightened risk
- 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
- Staff are aware of the different barriers to inclusion and equality and consider the wider implications for children and their families.

At the Fledgelings Preschool we support children to become considerate adults

- Children's social and emotional development is shaped by early experiences and relationships The EYFS supports children's earliest skills in an age appropriate way to become social citizens, namely 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; risk taking behaviours, rules and boundaries; not to hurt/upset other people with words and actions; consequences of hurtful/discriminatory behaviour and regulating behaviour.

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