

HARTCLIFFE NURSERY SCHOOL



Equalities Policy

Approved by:	Governing Body	Date: 21.03.2024
Signed: Chair of Governors	Holly Antoñana	
Signed: Headteacher	Cate Peel	
Last reviewed on:	20.03.2024	
Next review due by:	20.03.2025	

Scope

This policy is inclusive of all members of the school community, including children, families, parent/ carers, partners and visitors.

Monitoring

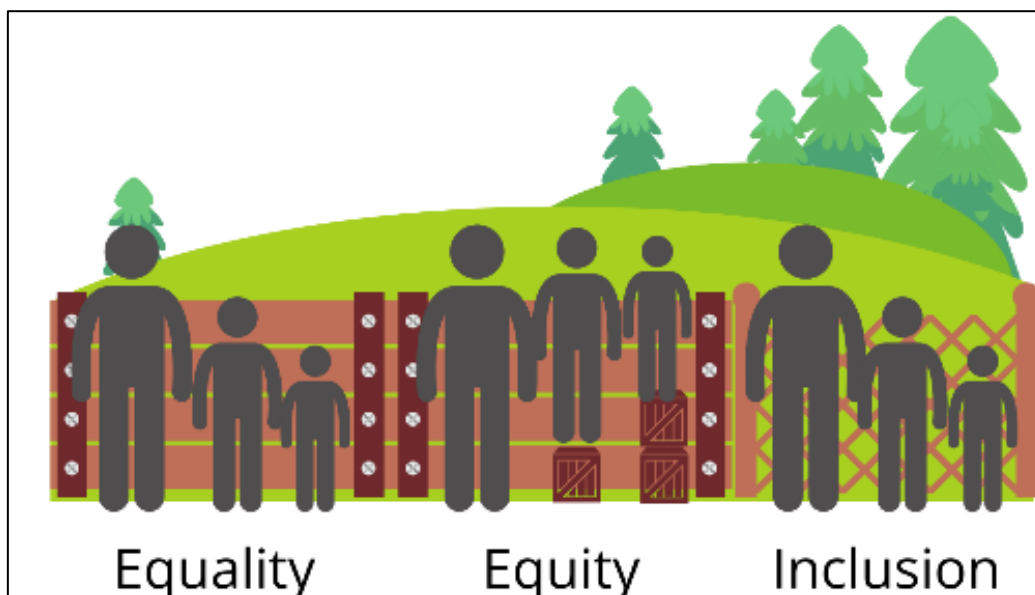
We will report annually on the policy and analyse whether it has furthered the aims of the general equality duty and in particular educational outcomes for all within our centre with reference to the protected groups.

This policy should be read in conjunction with related policies and procedures, in particular the Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy and Employment Policies.

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Definitions

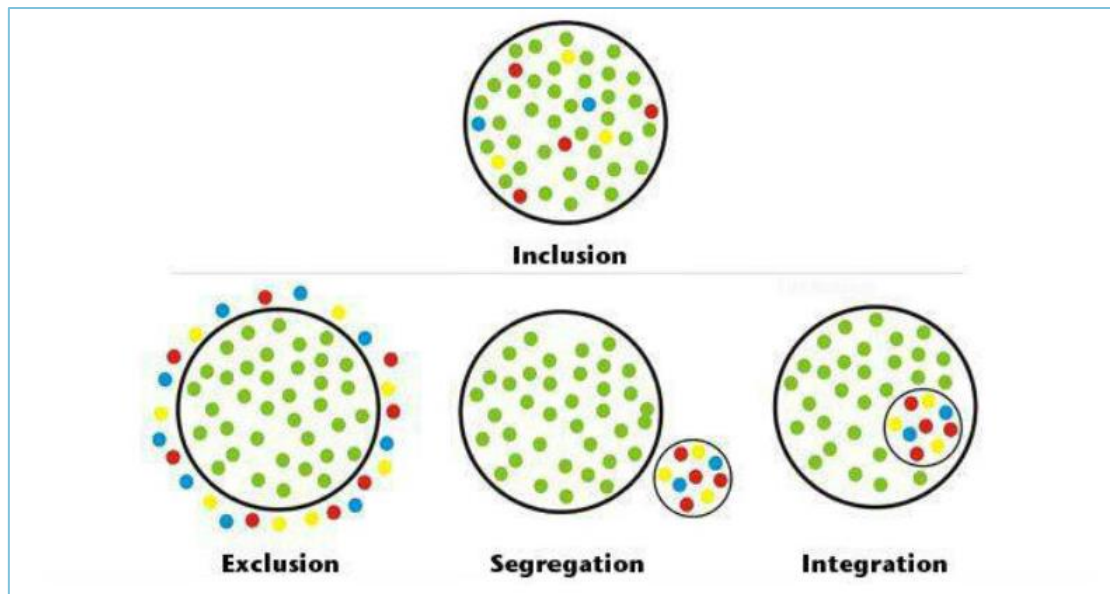


Equality: This means offering the same rights and opportunities to **all** people and protecting people from being discriminated against. The state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Equity: This means offering those rights and opportunities fairly, which means catering to people's differences, so they are given **fair access to the opportunities**. The term 'equity' refers to **fairness and justice** and is distinguished from equality: equity means recognising that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge, and make adjustments to imbalances.

The process is ongoing, requiring us to identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures.

Diversity: This is understanding that **each person is unique**. It means embracing the range of human differences, including people's beliefs, abilities, preferences, backgrounds, values and identities. Diversity refers to recognising and respecting and valuing differences in people.



Taken from: <http://www.friendshipcircle.org/blog/2014/01/02/inclusion-what-it-is-and-what-it-isnt/>

Inclusion: Inclusion means that all people, without exception, **have the right to be included, respected and appreciated** as valuable members of the community.

Inclusion in education refers to all children being able to access and gain equal opportunities to education and learning.

There is commitment and support from leaders so that we can all individually and collectively do our best.

Statement of intent

We understand that we cannot achieve equality by treating everyone the same.

We have a responsibility to ensure positive attitudes to diversity and difference so that all children are included and not disadvantaged but also so that they learn to value diversity and are able to make a positive contribution to society. We know that prejudiced attitudes and discrimination are learnt early on in life and that we have a key role in challenging discriminatory behaviour.

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- To promote equality of access and opportunity within our school and within our wider community

Our Approach

The following key concepts are fundamental to our approach:

- ❖ **Social cohesion** within our centre and the local community
- ❖ **Excellence** – our aim is to inspire and recognise high achievement for all members of our community
- ❖ **Personal and cultural identity** – we will provide opportunities to explore and value individual identities
- ❖ **Fairness and social justice** – developing our understanding of inequality that exists and explore ways of promoting a fairer society.

We seek to provide a welcoming and respectful environment that allows us to question and challenge discrimination and inequality, resolve conflicts peacefully and work and learn free from harassment and violence.

Aims

Belonging and Inclusion

At Hartcliffe Nursery School, we commit to creating an ethos and environment, through positive relationships:

- that provides a **safe and inclusive** learning community that embraces and celebrates every child and their family's **uniqueness**.
- that fosters a **positive sense of self**, a sense of **belonging, power** and **agency** for everyone.
- where everyone feels **welcomed, respected, supported and valued** to bring their full, **authentic** selves to nursery and **to be seen** for who they are **as individuals**.
- where **families feel comfortable** to send their children to nursery knowing that their children will be valued and that **prejudice and discrimination will be actively challenged and eliminated**.
- that enables **positive social connections** and a confident perception of their **connection** with the **community**, and **remove barriers** to learning which lead to deep feelings of alienation.
- that **includes** and **supports** every child, **regardless of ethnicity, culture, language, gender, beliefs, socio-economic background or disability**.
- that **remove barriers to participation**, that enables children to **access education** that is **inclusive and values diversity**. Where they learn from each other and benefit from an **understanding** of their different experiences.
- that **seeks to understand** and **embrace** every child and their family's **personal history**, to learn about families and their **cultural identities** so that we can reduce barriers and provide a space where everyone can **thrive, succeed and reach their full potential**.
- that says, **'I matter', 'I belong here', 'I am known', 'I am seen', 'I am heard.'**

The Enabling Environment:

- is emotionally and physically safe for everyone, including those with protected characteristics.
- celebrates diversity. Children see people who look like them represented positively. They feel secure in understanding that similarities and differences are celebrated and respected.
- 'reflects reality', embracing the unique culture of every child, their family and lived experiences.
- provision and resources are adapted to support and meet the individual needs of EVERY child and no child is excluded.

This document meets the requirements under the following legislation:

- [The Equality Act 2010](#), to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.
- [The Equality Act 2010 \(Specific Duties\) Regulations 2011](#), which requires us to publish information and demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and to publish our equality objectives.

This document is also based on Department for Education (DfE) guidance: [The Equality Act 2010 and schools](#).

The Equalities Act 2010 outlines legislation that provides protection against discrimination for people who share the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect – We will ensure that we regularly review all aspects of our policy, procedures, practice and provision to ensure an inclusive school which protects the characteristics stated in the Equality Act 2010.

We welcome our duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion. We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998. We adhere to the principles of and promote anti-oppressive practice.

We adhere to both the [Bristol Equality Charter](#) and [Bristol Children's Charter](#) with a view to contribute towards the [One City Plan](#).

We adhere to the Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2023 which states:

The EYFS seeks to provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.



We follow guidance from Birth to 5 Matters Inclusive practice and equalities

Key points:

- Equalities and inclusion apply to all children and families.
- Equity requires more than treating everyone the same.
- Talking about race is a first step in countering racism.
- Building awareness through first-hand experiences has lasting impact.
- Ensure children can see themselves and their families reflected in the environment.
- Focus on the child at the centre.

- Practitioners working with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) acknowledge and value each child, emphasising what they can do through a strengths-based perspective on disability.

We welcome and follow the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

<p>ARTICLE 2 (non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 8 (protection and preservation of identity) Every child has the right to an identity.</p>
<p>ARTICLE 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 13 (freedom of expression) Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 14 (freedom of thought, belief and religion) Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.</p>
<p>ARTICLE 15 (freedom of association) Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 22 (refugee children) If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 23 (children with a disability) A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.</p>
<p>ARTICLE 24 (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 27 (adequate standard of living) Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 28 (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children’s dignity and their rights.</p>
<p>ARTICLE 29 (goals of education) Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 30 (children from minority or indigenous groups) Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.</p>	<p>ARTICLE 31 (leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.</p>

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board will:

- Ensure that the equality information and objectives as set out in this policy are published on the website, are shared with, and understood by staff, children and parents.
- Ensure that the published equality information is updated at least every year, and that the objectives are reviewed and updated at least every 4 years.
- Delegate responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the objectives on a daily basis to the headteacher.

The equality link governor is Sarah Goode. They will:

- Meet with the Headteacher and other relevant staff members every term, to discuss any issues and how these are being addressed.
- Ensure they are familiar with all relevant legislation and the contents of this document.
- Attend appropriate equality and diversity training.
- Report back to the full governing board regarding any issues.

The headteacher will:

- Promote knowledge and understanding of the equality objectives among staff, children and parents.
- Monitor success in achieving the objectives and report back to governors.
- identify any staff training needs, and provide training through staff meetings or INSET days.

Staff responsibilities

- to have regard for this policy and to work individually and as a team to achieve the nursery's objectives.
- Familiarise themselves with this and related policies, procedures and action plans, including the school's equality objectives.
- Participate in developing and reviewing the nursery's vision statement, this policy and related action plans and disseminating information related to it.
- Support the Head teacher in the day-to-day management and implementation of the policy
- Are proactive in promoting a culture of respect and fairness and an inclusive and collaborative ethos
- Model and develop a positive attitude towards equality, diversity and inclusivity.
- Provide materials that reflect our diverse community and the wider communities and that give positive images
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination, dealing fairly and professionally with any incidents
- Liaise with the head teacher and other leaders as necessary to provide support in addressing any issues relating to equality or discrimination
- Undertake appropriate training and keep up to date with legislation.

Eliminating discrimination

Challenging/responding to discriminatory behaviour

- We recognise that such behaviour is driven by negative assumptions, stereotypes or misinformation, which is then directed at an individual or group.
- We take action to prevent, challenge and eliminate discriminatory behaviour.
- We ensure that staff are supported to have the confidence to challenge each other as well as parents /families/visitors.
- We keep a log of all incidents of discriminatory behaviour and send details to Bristol City Council as required and involve other agencies if required.
- We make an active commitment to work against racial injustice and discrimination.
- We strive to make conscious and thoughtful decisions regarding our own behaviours and how they negatively influence and impact our own biases and actions.
- We are reflective and self-aware, being mindful of our own unconscious biases. We are courageous, self-reflective and strive to continually develop our own behaviours.
- To think about the language we use; every word is considered to ensure that our language does not exclude or stereotype based on individual characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, age, ability or gender identity.

Advancing equality of opportunity

As set out in the DfE guidance on the Equality Act, the school aims to advance equality of opportunity by:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people that are connected to a particular characteristic they have, for example, children with SEND.
- Taking steps to meet the particular needs of people who have a particular characteristic, for example, children and families with English as an additional Language (EAL)
- Encouraging people who have a particular characteristic to participate fully in all areas of curriculum.

In fulfilling this aspect of the duty, the school will:

- Identify groups with a particular characteristic and track their progress over time.
- Analyse our assessments identify strengths and areas that need developing in order for the child to make progress in their development and learning. We will use our assessments to plan learning opportunities and targeted interventions to enable progress and meet the child's needs.

Equality considerations in decision-making

The school ensures it has due regard to equality considerations whenever significant decisions are made.

The school always considers the impact of significant decisions on particular groups. For example, when planning an event or celebration, does this take into account of:

- any religious holidays (Ramadan and families who may be fasting and would not be able to be included in a family picnic.)
- accessibility for children with disabilities
- Dietary requirements are considered – links to faith, Halal or allergies.

Employment

We are committed to the implementation, monitoring and active promotion of equal opportunities principles in all aspects of staffing and employment.

All staff appointments and promotions are made on the basis of merit and in compliance with the law. However, we are concerned to ensure that, wherever possible, the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of our community.

As an employer we will eliminate discrimination and harassment in our employment practice, and actively promote equality across all groups within our workforce.

Equality aspects such as gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment and faith or religion are considered when appointing staff and evaluating staff structures, to ensure decisions are free from discrimination.

We strive to employ practitioners who have some of the same identity features as children and families with regard to ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and language.

Actions to ensure this commitment is met include:

- We are an equal opportunity employer; posts are advertised and all participants are judged against explicit and fair criteria.
- All job descriptions include a commitment to equality and diversity as part of their specifications. We will consider positive action when recruiting to posts, to attract people from under-represented groups into our workforce.
- Monitoring recruitment and retention
- Recording all incidents of bullying and harassment of staff
- Continued professional development opportunities for all staff

We fully comply with legislation that protects our staff from discrimination based on the protected characteristics.

This includes:

1. Making such reasonable adjustments as are necessary to prevent a person being at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with another person. This will include aspects such as recruitment, training, promotions.
2. We do not ask applicants about their health until a job offer has been made or require applicants to complete health questionnaires.
3. Ensuring the safety and well-being of all our staff and taking seriously any reports of harassment and discrimination.
4. Taking the necessary actions to remove barriers to inclusion and ensuring a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment.

Linked policies and procedures: recruitment and employment

Promoting equality of access, opportunity and outcomes

We commit to promoting **equality of access, opportunity and outcomes** in the following ways:

- All policies and procedures are prepared with due regard to our duties and best practice. Staff are involved in drawing up policies and so are familiar with them.
- All staff working with children and adults encourage positive, respectful behaviour and support children to express their feelings and uniqueness through play and a range of learning opportunities.

- Staff are pro-active in addressing any potential barriers for children and families in accessing services and provision, listening carefully to the views of the families and linking with external partners as appropriate.
- We consider how we present information to parents, families, staff and visitors, for example, the website is accessible, translated into the languages spoken by families at Nursery, visuals are used where appropriate.
- Home visits – we respect and follow cultural rituals, for example, taking off shoes when we arrive.
- Investing time to build relationships with families with English as an additional language, through human connection. Using Google translate to support conversation and understanding.
- Taking real objects or visuals to explain something, for example, the routine and when to arrive.
- We actively seek opportunities to learn about equality issues outside the centre and to establish mechanisms for addressing them within the centre.

Our Equalities Policy in action: The Curriculum

We define the curriculum as everything we learn; pedagogy, relationships, interactions, routines, environment, resources, provision.

We:

- provide a range of opportunities for children and adults, such as visitors and trips, to encourage an awareness of the diverse community that we live in.
- monitor children’s progress carefully and plan appropriate interventions where children may be at risk of achieving poor outcomes.
- monitor outcomes and evaluate the provision to ensure that we are meeting objectives.
- ensure a consistent approach to supporting children’s social and emotional development so they are confident and empowered learners.
- work in partnership with parents/ carers to make children’s learning real and meaningful when learning about each other and our unique cultures.
- invite parents/ carers into nursery to share stories in their home language developing children’s awareness of different languages.
- celebrate festivals and religious events together, learning from each other and making links in a meaningful way about what is similar and different. We work in collaboration, for example, having an Eid Party and cooking together learning recipes.

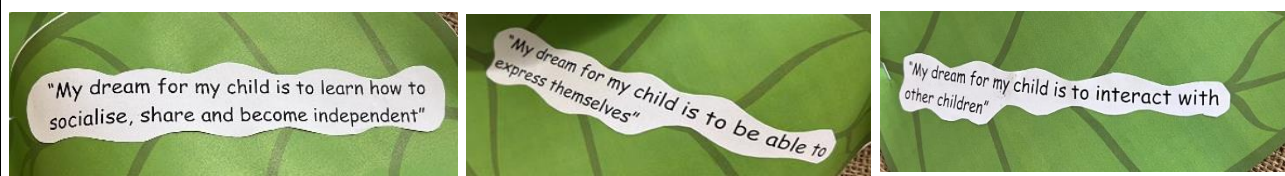
Inclusive learning environment - Reflecting Reality

Home Bases

Each child is in a key group with a key person in their own cosy home base which gives a sense of belonging, ‘I belong’, ‘This is my group’ and ‘I am important within this group’.

Family boards have photos of each child and their family, including the parent/ carer’s aspirations and dreams for their child.

Photographs of children and their learning are displayed, giving the opportunity to celebrate their learning and develop a positive sense of self.



Routines



Children's photos are laid out when they arrive. Children self-register and post their photo up, 'I am here, I belong here, I am visible here'.

The key person welcomes every child and family in at the beginning of the session calling them by their preferred name, giving the message, 'you are seen', 'you are known', 'We are pleased to see you.'



We make sure we call children by their preferred name and strive to pronounce names accurately.

We strive to call the parent/ carers by their first names too.

Books and Stories



We regularly review our books, pictures and small world resources to ensure they reflect reality of our children and the world today, 'Can I see myself in this story?' 'Am I reflected in a positive light?' We share books that actively challenge stereotypes. This enables children to explore and make sense of their world in a safe and meaningful way.

- We ensure that all books and resources represent people in a positive light; people of different ethnicities, with disabilities, age.

We make sure that we celebrate diversity and recognise that no two families are the same, each has a unique ethnicity/ heritage and also includes; single parents, same-sex parents, grandparents, children in care with a special adult or guardian. We also celebrate our Hartcliffe Nursery School family.

We avoid tokenism and are committed to being authentic and genuine when exploring festivals for example. We think about how we can make learning meaningful and support children to make links with what they know and new experiences. We are continually reviewing and reflecting on our practice so we can develop and learn ourselves.

Role Play

We choose not to have role play with specific dressing up outfits, superman for example. We encourage creativity and role-play clothing that allows children to play in gender-flexible ways.

We think about how household items in the role play area reflect the cultures of our community.



Care Routines

Talk with your family and learn how toileting routines happen at home.

Understanding the World – People and Communities

Planned group times that explore similarities and differences and what makes me special.

Development Matters 2021

Make connections between the features of their family and other families.

Be open to children talking about differences and what they notice. For example, when children ask questions like: "Why do you wear a scarf around your head?" or "How come your hair feels different to mine?" Point out the similarities between different families, as well as discussing differences.

Notice differences between people.	Model positive attitudes about the differences between people including differences in ethnicity and religion. Support children's acceptance of difference. Have resources which include: positive images of people who are disabled, books and play materials that reflect the diversity of life in modern Britain including racial and religious diversity materials which confront gender stereotypes.
Begin to make sense of their own life-story and family's history.	Spend time with children talking about photos and memories. Encourage children to retell what their parents told them about their life-story and family.
Continue developing positive attitudes about the differences between people.	Ensure that resources reflect the diversity of life in modern Britain. Encourage children to talk about the differences they notice between people, whilst also drawing their attention to similarities between different families and communities. Answer their questions and encourage discussion. Suggestion: talk positively about different appearances, skin colours and hair types. Celebrate and value cultural, religious and community events and experiences. Help children to learn each other's names, modelling correct pronunciation. Practitioners can create books and displays about children's families around the world, or holidays they have been on. Encourage children to talk about each other's families and ask questions. Use a diverse range of props, puppets, dolls and books to encourage children to notice and talk about similarities and differences.
Know that there are different countries in the world and talk about the differences they have experienced or seen in photos.	
Understand that some places are special to members of their community.	Name and explain the purpose of places of worship and places of local importance to the community to children, drawing on their own experiences where possible. Take children to places of worship and places of local importance to the community. Invite visitors from different religious and cultural communities into the classroom to share their experiences with children.
Recognise that people have different beliefs and celebrate special times in different ways.	Weave opportunities for children to engage with religious and cultural communities and their practices throughout the curriculum at appropriate times of the year. Help children to begin to build a rich bank of vocabulary with which to describe their own lives and the lives of others.

Equality Groups – children: with a Special Educational Needs and/ or Disability (SEND)
in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
from a Minority Ethnic Group (Remember that this term uses 'minority' in a UK context, whereas UK minority ethnic groups are often a global majority)
with Low Attendance
on a Child Protection (CP) or Child in Need (CIN)

PRIORITY	ACTIONS
Inclusion To actively consider inclusion as the new Curriculum is developed.	To plan and review each termly "curricular goal" considering the needs of individual children e.g. SEND, EAL, ethnicity, gender To plan and review each curricular target considering how to ensure it is accessible and meaningful to all children.
SEND Develop planning to ensure – children with SEND are able to access the curriculum and can make progress.	As above. Monitor new curriculum with this group in mind; consider relevance and access.
SEND Develop the use of the 'Focus child' week to support assessment, alongside the DEYO and individual targets.	Review assessment for SEND children across the school. Review workload for staff: finding a manageable system that supports both children and staff and is fit for purpose. To create an assessment that shows progress of children with SEND.
Children with EAL To ensure that children with EAL make outstanding progress and are not left behind.	Track the progress of children with EAL as a priority. Reflect on what is going well and identify how we can improve practice to enable progress. Use visuals and Makaton consistently to improve communication and meaning making. Provide Makaton CPD for practitioners. Prioritise children with EAL for 'Focus Children Weeks'.
Support the induction of children learning EAL and their families more effectively	Review Home Visits and paperwork; include visuals, objects of reference, download Google translate. Actively seek a translator to support. Promote and use the website with parents more effectively. Work with Family Support navigator to make links with families and support access to classes and groups, ESOL for example.

	<p>Ensure labelling and important signs/ information are translated into the languages used in Nursery.</p> <p>For staff to learn key words in a family's home language.</p>
<p>Reduce the attainment gap for children in communication and language, reading and writing</p>	<p>Develop and embed intervention programmes to support those at risk of not making progress: Chatterbox</p> <p>Embed Core Story Approach</p> <p>Improve the provision to ignite children's motivation to write-make marks</p> <p>Share audit</p> <p>Embed Letters and Sounds planning into teaching.</p>
<p><i>Empower staff to lead on the elimination of racial discrimination</i></p>	<p>Organise staff meeting with SARI</p> <p>Log any incidents that staff have had to deal with</p> <p>Staff feel that they can and do challenge racial prejudice and discrimination</p>

BRISTOL

Equality Charter

Everybody counts - a pledge for equality across Bristol

Bristol is a vibrant city with a growing diverse population. We share an ambition to create a fairer, safer, accessible and inclusive city where everyone feels they belong, has a voice and an equal opportunity to succeed and thrive.

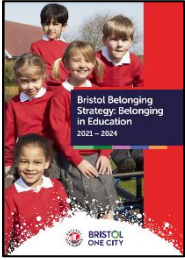
We are committed to making a real difference by:

- 1 Making Bristol a welcoming city where everyone feels they belong
- 2 Inspiring trust and confidence in all the city has to offer
- 3 Recognising, valuing and celebrating diversity
- 4 Building good relations and understanding between people
- 5 Promoting inclusion, participation and equal access
- 6 Challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying, hate crime and victimisation

As an organisation we will:

- 1 Recognise, support and empower those responsible for promoting equality in our organisation
- 2 Listen to and understand the diverse needs of all people to make our information, services and products more accessible and inclusive
- 3 Review the diversity of our workforce in order to identify areas for improvement and set ourselves equality goals
- 4 Ensure that equal opportunities are integral to how we recruit and treat our workforce
- 5 Address all allegations of discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation in an effective and timely manner
- 6 Play our part in promoting good relations between people from different backgrounds
- 7 Share good equality practice and improve outcomes for all those living, working, studying in or visiting Bristol
- 8 Measure and share our progress and success

Useful links Bristol Belonging Strategy: Belonging in Education 2021-2024



https://www.bristolonecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/3-Belonging-Strategy-Belonging-in-Education_weba_v2.pdf

Appendix 1



Inclusive practice and equalities

<https://birthto5matters.org.uk/inclusive-practice-and-equalities/>

Key points:

- Equalities and inclusion apply to all children and families.
- Equity requires more than treating everyone the same.
- Talking about race is a first step in countering racism.
- Building awareness through first-hand experiences has lasting impact.
- Ensure children can see themselves and their families reflected in the environment.
- Focus on the child at the centre.
- Practitioners working with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) acknowledge and value each child, emphasising what they can do through a strengths-based perspective on disability.



A commitment to valuing and respecting the diversity of individuals, families and communities must sit at the heart of early years practice. Inequalities persist in society, with far-reaching effects on children's education, health and life chances. Early years settings have a vital role to play in explicitly addressing all forms of discrimination and prejudice. In doing so, we will meet the Equality Act 2010 requirement that no child or family is discriminated against in terms of the protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

Inclusion and equalities apply to all children and families. These characteristics of identity apply to all people, not just those in minoritised groups, so equality means considering practices in relation to all individuals and groups. Each child and family bring their own identity, values and their unique funds of knowledge that are built over time by taking part in the practices of their community.

No matter how well-meaning, human beings are subject to bias. We are all influenced by ideas from the society we live in which affect our attitudes, beliefs and the way we see others and how they may live their lives. By becoming aware of and challenging any bias or misconceptions, practitioners can work with families in an equal partnership that requires actively listening to the realities, experiences and perspectives of each individual. Creating an ethos of equality involves being aware of how all the practices and environments in an early years setting appear through the lens of each unique child. Managers should ensure that time is given for individuals and staff teams to engage in reflective practice, thinking through issues of inclusion and equalities including their own views and prejudices, and to think through future concerns as they arise including possible conflicts with views that children may encounter at home.

Practitioners should share their willingness to challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings as they arise in play, conversation, books or other contexts – whether about communities, families, languages, gender, special educational needs, disabilities, race, ethnicity, faith or cultures. Settings can value the diversity they hold. Practitioners themselves carry a wealth of knowledge from their own diverse backgrounds that should be celebrated.

As well as legally protected characteristics, diversity in the setting may include children living in temporary accommodation, refugees and asylum seekers, or children and families that have very different lives or family structures. When families engage with services, it is important to bear in mind that in some families' protected characteristics or identity markers may overlap. Such combinations are known as intersectionality, and may make some children and families more prone to discrimination or privilege than others.

Equity and inclusion require more than treating everyone the same. There is an important difference between equity and equality. Equality aims to provide fairness through treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this through treating people differently dependent on need. While it is vital for all children and their families to be included and for difference to be celebrated, it is also important that early years practitioners are aware of the significant physical, emotional and cognitive barriers many children encounter in accessing early education. Low socio-economic status, mistrust of the establishment, lack of access to play experiences, overcrowded living conditions, parental illiteracy, etc. all take a toll. Practitioners should acknowledge the unique situations that families find themselves in, and plan to lessen the effects of these barriers by offering additional opportunities, for example increased time on balance bikes for those children living with no access to outside space.

Practitioners should also be aware that within any organisation there are often “taken for granted” norms which are unspoken and implicit, for example: *we wear coats when we go outside, we go outside even if it's cold or raining, boys and girls play together, it's great to get messy, food play is good, we eat with our knives and forks.* Practitioners need to understand that these are not universal values, and their assumptions may need to change. Sometimes children and their families may require extra support, such as provision of wellies, and sensitive conversations to develop trust.

Talking about race is a first step in countering racism. It is a mistaken assumption that treating all people in the same way and ignoring differences in race is a sufficient response to racism. This approach simply allows the continuation of bias in society which disadvantages people from black and minoritised groups. Instead of a colour-blind approach to race, more proactive anti-racism is needed.

Practitioner training is an important step toward opening dialogue and developing understanding about white privilege, systemic racism, and how racism affects children and families in early years settings. It is also time to challenge the widespread notion that “children do not see race” and are colour blind to difference. When adults are silent about race, children’s racial prejudice and misconceptions can be maintained or reinforced. Encouraging dialogue and conversation about difference can evoke children’s strong sense of fairness and break down false assumptions about everyone being able to succeed on their merits, so that children recognise racist behaviours and develop anti-racist views.

Attitudes toward gender and sexual orientation can limit children and create inequality. During the early years a child’s attitudes and dispositions are continually being shaped. Children are influenced by their environments and the adults around them in ways which often affect children’s own ideas about themselves. In terms of gender and sexual orientation, young children can develop stereotypical ideas about how they should be and who they should become which can limit their potential. It is important that practitioners do not shy away from these conversations and instead challenge the effects of prejudice and discrimination. Children’s resources and books should avoid stereotypical depictions of people on the basis of gender and sexual orientation.

A child may also be part of a family which is LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, plus other variations). Early years settings have an opportunity to prevent prejudices from occurring by ensuring that these children and their families feel welcome and valued. In practice, this means that settings should ensure that their environments are welcoming and supportive and actively celebrate the value of diversity. Ultimately, supporting children to embrace and celebrate differences between them, their families and others is a crucial part of doing equalities work and fostering inclusive practice.

Building awareness through first-hand experiences has lasting impact. In order to promote and value diversity, settings should consider ways of sharing and celebrating children’s lived experiences, being sensitive to the children’s differing circumstances and ensuring that practices are inclusive of all. Parents may be happy to be involved in sharing aspects of their everyday life and community. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is clear that every child has a right to an identity and part of the goals of education is to foster respect for their own and other cultures. While it is important for children to see their own identity reflected in positive ways in the setting, it is equally important for children in settings where there is little diversity to become aware of and to appreciate difference. Visits to places where children can be involved with different cultures and see ways people live and worship can be memorable – children can taste food they are unfamiliar with, and explore artefacts, enjoy clothing, music, dance and languages from different cultures.

Ensure children can see themselves and their families in the environment. Sometimes the environment, both physical and emotional, speaks more loudly than the policies, so it is important to consider how the environment in the setting enables the children and their families to view diversity positively. Children need to see representation of someone who “looks like me”, or “has a family structure like mine”, or “lives somewhere like where I live”, etc. Children absorb and develop ideas of what is possible for themselves from the images and materials around them, such as:

- photographs of the children themselves (where acceptable to the families)
- books, posters, small world play materials that depict and enable acting out a range of identities which actively challenge stereotypical representations and avoid tokenism

- representation of different races, disabilities, ages, types of families including single parents, same-sex parents, grandparents raising children
- role-play clothing that allows children to play in gender-flexible ways and reflects diverse cultures, and household items reflecting various cultures and communities
- areas where children can relax and “just be”, perhaps with pictures and cultural mementos
- practitioners who have some of the same identity features as children and families – race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, language.

Focus on the child at the centre. All children are unique. There is a recognition that every child brings with them a rich heritage when they arrive in an early education setting. Their homes, families, life experiences and beliefs provide the bedrock to their identity. The differences between children offer wonderful opportunities to learn about and celebrate these differences.

Practitioners should also understand that children have their own feelings about their lives and their identity. Their voice should be central and their funds of knowledge respected. Actively encouraging home stories and valuing family ways of being supports children to develop a positive self-identity.

Practitioners working with children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) acknowledge and value each child, emphasising what they can do through a strengths-based perspective on disability. Offering all children opportunities to explore, discover and take risks in early years provision helps them to become competent, capable and resilient learners. This position also endorses the UNCRC article 28 that every child has a right to an education and article 29 which states that education should develop a child’s personalities, fascinations and abilities to the full.

In order to dispel issues of “ableism” all children need to grow up to recognise that they are not all the same and different tools or strategies might be needed to make sure they thrive. It is vital that all children are encouraged to notice the many aspects of diversity and difference across society. A positive approach to inclusion in the early years will support all children’s development and learning across their lifetime and will have an impact on society as a whole.

The statutory SEND Code of Practice explains the action early years providers should take to meet their duties in identifying and supporting all children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities, whether or not they have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Identifying and assessing special education needs for young children whose first language is not English requires particular care. Early years practitioners should look carefully at all aspects of a child’s development and learning to establish whether any delay is related to learning English as an additional language or if it arises from SEN or disability. Difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not SEN.

Developing a sense of belonging is an important part of inclusive practice. Feeling different or being marginalised can lead to feelings of social isolation. When children and their families are able to develop a sense of belonging to a wider community this can reduce these feelings and provide children with a more secure base from which they can learn, develop and flourish. Early years settings are well placed to promote feelings of belonging which are an important part of inclusive practice. Practitioners should actively plan to help children develop positive peer relationships, for example having focused small group times, celebrating difference and diversity in all its guises and creating a culture of “we” rather than “us and them”.

