



Seedlings Pre School
St Johns Memorial Hall

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Equality and Diversity Policy – Including Children's Rights and Entitlements -Looked After Children

Statement of intent

Seedlings Pre School is committed to providing an educational service which gives equal opportunity and freedom from unlawful or unfair discrimination. The service we provide will be fully inclusive, meeting the needs of all the children. We recognise and respect that children and their families come from diverse backgrounds and that they have needs and values that arise from their social and economic, ethnic and cultural or religious backgrounds. Children grow up in diverse family structures including: two parent, single parent or same sex parent families. We also recognise that some children will have close links with their extended families such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins or may live with a member of their extended family or foster carers in the event that they have been removed from the care of their close kin or have been orphaned.

We recognise that some children have needs that arise from disability or impairment, or may have parents that are affected by disability or impairment. Some families may experience social exclusion or hardship, discrimination or prejudice due to their ethnicity, their language, their religion, age or gender.

All of these factors can affect a child's well being and subsequently impact upon their learning and development. We are committed to promoting anti-discriminatory practice which breeds equality of opportunity and value for diversity for all children and their families.

Aim

- provide a secure and accessible environment in which all our children can flourish and where all contributions are considered and valued.
- Include and value the contributions of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- Provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and people with disabilities.
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues around anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity.
- Challenge and eliminate discriminatory actions.
- Make inclusion a thread that runs through all the activities of the setting.

Procedures:

Admissions

Seedlings is open to all members of the community.

- We provide information in clear, concise language, whether in spoken or written form and have access to a translation if required.
- Our admissions policy is based on a fair system.



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- All parents are made aware of our equality and diversity policy.
- We will not discriminate against a child or their family, or prevent entry to our setting, on the basis of a protected characteristic as defined by the Equalities Act (2010). These are:
 - disability
 - race
 - gender reassignment
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
 - age
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - marriage and civil partnership
- We will not discriminate against a child with a disability or refuse a child entry to our setting because of any disability.
- We will put in place an action plan to ensure that people with impairments can participate successfully in the services offered by the setting and in the curriculum offered.
- We take action against any discriminatory behaviour by staff or parents.
 - direct discrimination – someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic e.g. preventing families of some racial groups from using the service
 - indirect discrimination - someone is affected unfavourably by a general policy e.g. children must only speak English in the setting
 - association - discriminating against someone who is associated with a person with a protected characteristic e.g. behaving unfavourably to someone who is married to a person from a different cultural background
 - perception - discrimination on the basis that it is thought someone has a protected characteristic e.g. making assumptions about someone's sexual orientation because of their mannerisms or how they speak.
- Displaying of openly discriminatory and possibly offensive materials, name calling, or threatening behaviour are unacceptable on, or around, the premises and will be dealt with immediately and discreetly by asking the adult to stop using the unacceptable behaviour and inviting them to read and to act in accordance with the relevant policy statement and procedure. Failure to comply may lead to the adult being excluded from the premises.

Employment

- Posts are advertised and all applicants are judged against explicit and fair criteria.
- Applicants are welcome from all backgrounds and posts are open to all.
- We may use the exemption clauses of the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act where this is necessary to enable the service to best meet the needs of the community.
- The applicant who best meets the criteria is offered the post, subject to references and checks by the Disclosure Barring Service. This ensures fairness in the selection process.



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- All job descriptions include a commitment to promoting equality and respecting diversity as part of their specifications.
- We review and monitor our application process to ensure that it is always fair and accessible to all.

Training

- We continuously seek opportunities for staff and volunteers to undertake training to help them develop anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices.
- We review our practices regularly to ensure we are fully implementing our policy to provide equality, diversity and inclusion within the Pre School.

Curriculum

The curriculum offered in the setting encourages children to develop positive attitudes about themselves as well as to people who are different from themselves. It encourages children to empathise with others and to begin to develop the skills of critical thinking.

Our environment is as accessible as possible for all visitors and service users. If access to the settings is found to treat disabled children or adults less favourably, then we make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of disabled children and adults. We do this by:

- making children feel valued and good about themselves
- ensuring that children have equality of access to learning
- recognising the different learning styles of girls and boys, making appropriate provision within the curriculum to ensure each child receives the widest possible opportunity to develop their skills and abilities
- positively reflecting the widest possible range of communities in the choice of resources
- avoiding stereotypes or derogatory images in the selection of books or other visual materials
- celebrating a wide range of festivals
- creating an environment of mutual respect and tolerance
- helping children to understand that discriminatory behaviour and remarks are hurtful and unacceptable
- ensuring that the curriculum offered is inclusive of children with special educational needs and children with disabilities
- differentiating the curriculum to meet children's special educational needs
- ensuring that children learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning
- ensuring that children speaking languages other than English are supported in the maintenance and development of their home languages.

Valuing diversity in families

- We welcome families from diverse backgrounds and lifestyles and look to work with all families in the setting.
- We work with families to ensure they are able to manage the financial commitments pre



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school may involve and will arrange adjustments to the standard payment terms to support families who may struggle to pay on a termly basis.

- We encourage children to contribute stories of their everyday life to the setting.
- We encourage mothers, fathers and other carers to take part in the life of the setting and to contribute fully.
- For families who speak languages in addition to English, we will put measures in place ensure that everything at the pre school is accessible for them and the children feel comfortable and welcome.

Food

- We work in partnership with parents to ensure that the medical, cultural and dietary needs of children are met.
- We help children to learn about a range of food, and of cultural approaches to mealtimes and eating, and to respect the differences among them

Meetings

- Meetings are arranged to ensure that all families who wish to may be involved
- We positively encourage fathers to be involved in the setting, especially those fathers who do not live with the child.
- Information about meetings is communicated in a variety of ways - written, verbal and in translation if required, to ensure that all mothers and fathers have information about and access to the meetings.

Monitoring and reviewing

So that our policies and procedures remain effective, we monitor and review them annually to ensure our strategies meets the overall aims to promote equality, inclusion and to value diversity.

We provide a complaints procedure and a complaints summary record for parents to see.

Looked After Children

We are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff in our provision are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Children become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most looked after children will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s).

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their



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home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has an impact on their emotional well being. Most local authorities do not place children under five with foster carers who work outside the home; however, there are instances when this does occur or where the child has been placed with another family member who works.

We place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on two important concepts, attachment and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children's lives, as the foundation for resilience. These aspects of well being underpin the child's responsiveness to learning and enable the development of positive dispositions for learning. For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

Principles

- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.
- Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer, we will continue to offer the placement for the child.

Procedures

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator.
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs.
- The designated person and the key person liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure that appropriate information is gained and shared.
- The setting recognises the role of the local authority children's social care department as the child's 'corporate parent' and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the setting, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- At the start of a placement there is a professionals meeting to determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- The care plan needs to consider issues for the child such as:
 - their emotional needs and how they are to be met
 - how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed
 - their sense of self, culture, language(s) and identity and how this is to be supported
 - their need for sociability and friendship



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- their interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway
- how any special needs will be supported.
- In addition the care plan will also consider:
 - how information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority (as the 'corporate parent') as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored
 - what contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be at the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed
 - what written reporting is required
 - wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child's return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning
 - with the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings and fun days etc alongside the foster carer.
- The settling in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the 'proximity' stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a sufficient relationship with his or her key person for them to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.
- In the first two weeks after settling in, the child's well being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.
- Further observations about communication, interests and abilities will be noted to firm a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage prime and specific areas of learning and development.
- Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
- If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social care worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- The transition to school will be handled sensitively. The designated person and/or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.

Further guidance

Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)
Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES 2005)
Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

Children's rights and entitlements

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- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self image, which includes their heritage arising from their colour and ethnicity, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, cultural traditions and home background.
- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by encouraging children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence.
- We promote children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to by enabling children to have the self confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches.
- We help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults.
- We work with parents to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

What it means to promote children's rights and entitlements to be 'strong, resilient and listened to'

To be strong means to be:

- secure in their foremost attachment relationships, where they are loved and cared for by at least one person who is able to offer consistent, positive and unconditional regard and who can be relied on
- safe and valued as individuals in their families and in relationships beyond the family, such as day care or school
- self assured and form a positive sense of themselves including all aspects of their identity and heritage
- included equally and belong in early years settings and in community life
- confident in abilities and proud of their achievements
- progressing optimally in all aspects of their development and learning
- part of a peer group in which to learn to negotiate, develop social skills and identity as global citizens, respecting the rights of others in a diverse world
- able to represent themselves and participate in aspects of service delivery that affects them, as well as aspects of key decisions that affect their lives.

To be resilient means to:

- be sure of their self worth and dignity
- be able to be assertive and state their needs effectively
- be able to overcome difficulties and problems
- be positive in their outlook on life
- be able to cope with challenge and change
- have a sense of justice towards themselves and others
- develop a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others
- be able to represent themselves and others in key decision making processes.

To be listened to means:

- adults who are close to children recognise their need and right to express and



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communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas

- adults who are close to children are able to tune in to their verbal, sign and body language in order to understand and interpret what is being expressed and communicated
- adults who are close to children are able to respond appropriately and, when required, act upon their understanding of what children express and communicate
- adults respect children's rights and facilitate children's participation and representation in imaginative and child centred ways in all aspects of core services.

Legal framework

The Equality Act (2010)

Children Act (1989) & (2004)

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001)

Other useful Pre school Learning Alliance publications

Guide to the Equality Act and Good Practice (2011)

All Together Now (2009)

Where's Dad? (2009)

Policy Reviewed: April 2017

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