Next Steps Pre-school, Elms Vale, Church Road, Dover, CT17 9LW
Tel: 01304 226234
Registered Charity No. 1156391

Equal Opportunities Policy

Valuing diversity and promoting equality

Policy statement

We will ensure that our service is fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children, particularly those that arise from their ethnic heritage, social and economic background, gender, ability or disability. Our setting is committed to anti-discriminatory practice to promote equality of opportunity and to value diversity for all children and families.

We aim to:

- provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued;
- include and value the contribution 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 of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity; and
- make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting.

Procedures

The legal framework for this policy is:

- Equality Act 2010;
- Race Relations Act 1976;
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000;
- Sex Discrimination Act 1986;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (June 2014); and
- Prevent Duty 2015.

Methods

Admissions

Our setting is open to all members of the community.

- We advertise our service widely.
- We reflect the diversity of members of our society in our publicity and promotional materials.

- We provide information in clear, concise language, whether in spoken or written form.
- We provide information in as many languages as possible.
- We base our admissions policy on a fair system.
- We ensure that all parents are made aware of our equal opportunities policy.
- We do not discriminate against a child or their family, or prevent entry to our setting, on the basis of colour, ethnicity, religion or social background, such as being a member of a travelling community or an asylum seeker.
- We do not discriminate against a child with a disability or refuse a child entry to our setting because of any disability.
- We develop an action plan to ensure that people with disabilities 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. Displaying openly racist insignia, distributing racist material, name-calling, harassment of any kind or threatening behaviour is unacceptable on or around the premises and will be dealt with in the strongest manner.

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.
- The pre-school 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 an enhanced criminal record check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This ensures fairness in the selection process.
- All job descriptions include a commitment to equality and diversity as part of their specifications.
- We monitor our application process to ensure that it is fair and accessible.

Training

- We seek out training opportunities for staff and volunteers to enable them to develop anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices that enable all children to flourish.
- We review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our policy for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Curriculum

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

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; and
- ensuring that children learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning.

Valuing diversity in families

- We welcome the diversity of family lifestyles and work with all families.
- We encourage children to contribute stories of their everyday life to the setting.
- We encourage parents/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 develop means to ensure their full inclusion.
- We offer a flexible payment system for families of differing means and offer information regarding sources of financial support.

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 foods and 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 in the running of the setting.
- Information about meetings is communicated in a variety of ways – written and verbal – to ensure that all parents have information about, and access to, the meetings.

Monitoring and reviewing

- To ensure our policies and procedures remain effective, we monitor and review them annually to ensure our strategies meet the overall aims of promoting equality, inclusion and valuing diversity.
- We provide a complaints procedure and a complaints summary record for parents to see.

Prevent Duty 2015 (see Prevent Duty Policy)

For schools and childcare providers to fulfil the Prevent duty, it is essential that staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified.

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' and childcare providers' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

Schools and childcare providers can also build children's resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist* views.

It is important to emphasise that the Prevent duty is not intended to stop children debating controversial issues.

On the contrary, schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments.

For early years childcare providers, the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2026 sets standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five, thereby assisting their personal, social and emotional development and understanding of the world.

The Prevent duty is entirely consistent with schools' and childcare providers' existing responsibilities and should not be burdensome.

Ofsted's revised education inspection framework (EIF) makes specific reference to the need to have safeguarding arrangements to promote children's welfare and prevent radicalisation and extremism.

The statutory guidance on the Prevent duty summarises the requirements on schools and childcare providers in terms of four general themes: risk assessment, working in partnership, staff training and IT policies.

* *‘Extremism’ is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas. Terrorist groups very often draw on extremist ideas developed by extremist organisations.*

This policy was adopted at a meeting in September 2026.

Next review: September 2027.

Name of signatory: Virginia McCarthy

Role of signatory: Manager