



BATTLEDOWN CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

A Specialist Early Years Centre

EQUAL CHANCES FOR CHILDREN POLICY

This policy covers all aspects of school's work including Special School, Extended Services (inc Daycare) and Child Development Centre

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We believe that every child has the right to live free from discrimination as stated in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child 1989.

If, as practitioners, we are to challenge discrimination and promote diversity, we will show a clear understanding of issues relating to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and disability.

As we work with children, our anti-discriminatory practice will promote

- diversity and the value of difference
- self-esteem and positive group identity
- fulfilment of individual potential
- the full participation of all groups in society

Introduction

This policy arises from a shared belief that young children are aware of and can be influenced by racist and sexist and other discriminatory behaviour, images, attitudes and language that they see and hear around them.

Attending Battledown Children's Centre may provide many children with their first experience of society outside the family. We accept the responsibility, which this places on us to make sure that the environment, experiences and curriculum we offer are free from the prejudice and discrimination which remain widespread. We aim to provide positive images of all the adults and children living in our society. We believe that:

- Children have a right to grow up and learn in an environment free from prejudice and without discrimination. Without this freedom their development will be harmed.

- Children who grow up feeling that they are inferior or that other people see them as inferior - because of their gender, colour, disability or family background will fail to achieve their full potential.
- Children who are allowed to assume superiority because of their colour, their gender, their religion, their able-bodiedness, their class or any other reason will have a false and damaging view of humanity.

All children are harmed by attitudes and assumptions, which fail to address in a positive way the differences, which exist between people. Equal chances are for everyone. All children regardless of their experience and background need the opportunity to understand that they are part of a community in which people and diversity are valued equally.

"People working with young children should value and respect the different racial origins, religions, cultures and languages in a multi-racial society so that each child is valued as an individual".

(The Children Act 1989)

In essence equal opportunities is about full acceptance of individual children and their families. It is for us to ensure that everything possible is done to give our families the chance to develop their full potential in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We want to provide opportunities to share what we have in common and explore the differences, which make our society so diverse and exciting. We believe that taking pride in ourselves and in our culture is not the same as considering ourselves superior to other peoples and cultures.

It is important to note that we will never have pronounced the last word on the subject of equal opportunity. This policy will be regularly reviewed in order to reflect new learning, which may have taken place as a result of our work with children and their families.

This policy has been produced with regard to our general and specific duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to actively promote race equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Opportunities to Value Each Other

Our curriculum will provide opportunities for children to learn to value themselves in order that they can learn to value others.

We will help children and adults feel that they are valued by:

- ◆ acknowledging their existence, culture and lifestyle
- ◆ listening to them seriously
- ◆ taking account of what they say through discussion or action
- ◆ remembering their names

- ◆ showing that we care for them
- ◆ showing that we like being with them
- ◆ displaying and celebrating achievements.

We will further develop a sense of value in children by providing opportunities for them to:

- ◆ discuss people's feelings generally and more specifically their own.
- ◆ learn about their own bodies and those which look different or work differently from their own
- ◆ learn to care for their own bodies and to know that no one has a right to intrude on them without permission
- ◆ be singled out for special attention from time to time
- ◆ express the things which they like or dislike
- ◆ be called by the names which are used for them at home
- ◆ share information about their families
- ◆ explore the many different kinds of food people eat
- ◆ learn about different celebrations which people enjoy throughout the year.

Features of our relationships with children will be concerned with the courtesy and dignity with which they are treated.

Courtesy

Of fundamental importance in our relationships with children is how we acknowledge them.

This includes:-

- ◆ placing ourselves at the child's level and giving eye contact whenever possible
- ◆ using the child's name in conversation
- ◆ giving opportunity and time for a child to make a response
- ◆ providing opportunities for a child to make choices and decisions
- ◆ telling a child what you are going to do with them or where you are going to take them before the event
- ◆ including a child in a conversation taking place about them
- ◆ ensuring that discussions with a parent or colleague do not take place in the child's hearing
- ◆ keeping discussions unrelated to the immediate needs of the child and the work of the school to a minimum during class time
- ◆ speaking in a way which is positive to children

Dignity

When we have difficulties understanding what children are trying to communicate we accept this as our problem. We admit to this and ask for help from someone who can understand.

When we are involved in the physical handling of children, e.g. lifting, toileting, dressing and feeding, we will take care to:-

- ◆ follow any guidance given by fellow professionals

- ◆ explain what we are about to do to the child
- ◆ familiarise ourselves with the special needs of each individual child
- ◆ take into consideration the wishes of the child
- ◆ ensure privacy when the child is using the bathroom
- ◆ focus on the child/children we work with at mealtimes, attending to personal hygiene such as wiping faces and cleaning spills
- ◆ have due regard at all times to our role with each child, their age and gender, their particular wishes and those of the parent/carer.

We aim for children at Battledown Children's Centre will identify with the statements which follow as a result of feeling valued

- I feel good
- People say 'Hello' to me and smile
- People remember my name & use it correctly when writing or saying it
- Adults listen to me when I talk to them and take what I say seriously, giving me plenty of time to think through what I am trying to tell them
- My opinions are sought and respected and I feel free to sometimes say NO
- I know the things I am good at and I am encouraged to use these skills to help other people
- Things which are important to me, such as my birthday, religion and culture, are acknowledged and celebrated in the group
- I feel at ease about my own body, its size and colour and shape. I know that it is like other people's bodies in many ways, and in some ways different. I know that some parts of it work better than others, and that this is so for other people too
- I know the names for at least some of the feelings I experience and I know other people can feel that way too
- My family are acknowledged, welcomed and asked after

The Learning Environment

The environment we offer at Battledown Children's Centre will be one rich in opportunity for children to explore their identity and build their self-esteem, free from inappropriate expectations and attitudes which might limit development.

We will offer opportunities for children to explore the community outside school and invite members of that community to share in school life. In this way we will develop the idea that life is made up of many different cultures to which everyone regardless of ability, gender, race or colour has a contribution to make.

We will provide

- Activities displayed in a way which encourages new/nervous children and parents to stay if they wish
- Energetic play genuinely accessible to children of both sexes and also to younger and less able children
- Play areas in the classroom which reflect domestic, commercial, cultural and social

backgrounds

- Dressing-up clothes which allow children to explore a range of roles, including those of the other sex and all cultures
- Activity areas arranged in a way which does not restrict access for children or adults with disabilities
- Displays, themes and projects which draw on a wide range of sources
- A language environment which reflects all the languages used in the group and which affirms the validity of languages other than English even in groups where English is the only spoken language
- Stories which reflect the variety of people, homes and families
- Positive visual images of people of both sexes and all ethnic groups, with and without disabilities

Then we will develop children's learning through:

Books and Storytelling

Stories and pictures will depict a world in which boys and girls, old and young people from all ethnic, religious and cultural groups, disabled and non-disabled, have positive qualities and are capable of dominating the action.

Visual Images

Children's pictures of the world are built up also from pictures on jigsaws, packaging and posters in catalogues, on hoardings and through magazines and other media. In using these resources we will seek to develop positive images which reflect value and respect for all regardless of gender, race, ability or family background.

Communication and Spoken Language

Children will be helped to develop communication and spoken language in ways which take account of their own individual and special needs. All children will have opportunity to be heard. Children without spoken language will have access to the Makaton Language Programme and the opportunity to learn signs and symbols. Children and adults, including those with spoken language, will be encouraged to use signing in communication. Children using inappropriate language, which is considered offensive to others, will be given an opportunity to develop their behaviour in a way which encourages more positive and appropriate expression in line with the School's "Developing Children's Behaviour" policy. Occasionally children will have the opportunity to hear language other than English being used.

Classroom Play Areas

We believe all children need to know about our multi-racial society. Where the class play area has 'food' in use, it will be representative of the food with which children in the group are familiar and similarly with dolls clothes and those used in role play.

Use of pictures, wall-hangings, packets with instructions in languages and forms of communication other than English and envelopes with stamps from other countries will all help to raise awareness. Thought will be given too to the type of furniture in use so that tables and chairs are not the only possibility. Dolls in use will be male and female, black and white with features appropriate to skin colour.

Role Play

This important activity gives children the opportunity to explore through role play the way they see people and what it might be like to be someone other than themselves, in a way that is not offensive. A wide range of options is vital therefore and we will provide opportunities for children to dress in the clothes of a person of a different sex or culture should they wish to explore in this way in order to extend their understanding of themselves and other people. We will help children to develop their imaginative play in this area.

Gross Motor Play

Just as careful management of play situations may be necessary to allow boys the 'freedom' they may need to play with dolls, so we will be alert to prevent the possibility of play equipment being dominated by groups of well co-ordinated, active boys.

Climbing frames, tots play equipment; soft play equipment and wheeled toys will be available also to other groups including younger children, new children, girls and children with disabilities.

Messages such as 'Girls don't do that', 'You might get hurt' and 'You won't be able to manage that', will be discouraged and children will be supported in discovering for themselves what they can do and enjoy, rather than what they cannot. Discussion with parents may be needed sometimes to prevent children being at the centre of conflicting attitudes.

Sensory Creative and Exploratory Play (Messy Play)

Some children will feel excluded from this type of play by the attitudes and expectations they bring with them from home.

They may have deeply rooted feelings about anything, which threatens the cleanliness of their hands, clothes or bodies. While these children are often the very ones who would benefit most from the release of messy play we believe we should not dismiss their feelings out of hand. A gentle introduction to messy play will be helped by the provision of:

- a willingness to accommodate to children not wishing to wear protective clothing
- efficient and attractive protective clothing
- the full range of primary and pastel colours at the painting easel
- well kneaded, non-sticky coloured play-dough, incorporating texture
- small pieces of clay which are soft but not sticky or wet
- exploring dry resources

Music

We believe children need access to a wide range of songs, rhythms, rhymes and instruments drawn from a variety of cultures. Whenever possible live music will be provided though we recognise that access to recorded music is likely to be the most ready resource. The freedom to make sound and music of any volume is the right of all children and we will help them explore this area of learning in an appropriate way whilst having regard for the needs of other people.

Working with Families

We believe in the need to constantly address the best way we can work with families. The choice ranges from meeting basic requirements such as daily contact to looking for new ways of working where open and honest communication can lead to a shared and improved understanding of roles, rights and responsibilities.

Central to our work is the belief that many families of young children with special needs feel anxious and isolated. For that reason Battledown Children's Centre offers a combined package of care and education for children and their families. We need to keep in mind the rights of families and what opportunities we should be providing for them. Such opportunities may include:

- giving information about learning environments.
- inviting families to express their views on learning environments.
- altering the learning environments of their children.
- inviting families to contribute to their children's school environments.
- helping them choose between alternative school environments.

We believe families need to play a part in school and in the process of assessment and education. Their views and opinions should be considered and accepted or rejected courteously and thoughtfully. Their values, religion, language and culture must always be respected and welcomed.

We are working constantly to improve the structures and systems, which empower families in the education of their children and are aware that our attitude to people is central to the process. Please refer to our policy on managing equality amongst adults for further information about the standards we set in our work with one another.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of a three year rolling programme by the Senior Leadership Team.