Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Policy

Promoting inclusion, equality and valuing diversity

Stepping Stones actively promote inclusion, equality of opportunity and value diversity. All early years providers have legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and must meet their duties under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). All early years providers must eliminate discrimination, promote equality, foster good relations with individuals and groups with protected characteristics namely disability, race (ethnicity), religion and belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership. 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.

At Stepping Stones 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 such as those that include disabled children/adults, different ethnic groups, mixed heritage families, gender diversity, single sex/same and different sex families, multi-generational households and 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. This includes photographs taken by staff of the local and wider community, of parents/carers and families and local events.
- Using textiles, prints, sculptures or carvings from diverse cultures in displays.
- Providing artefacts from a range of cultures, particularly for use in all areas of the setting, not just in the home corner.
- 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
  - use of textiles and secular artefacts in the room, and to handle and explore, that demonstrate valuing of the cultures from which they come
  - creating textiles such as tie dying, batik and creative use of textiles
  - provide mirrors at different heights for babies and other non-ambulant children
  - developing a music area with a variety of musical instruments for babies and children to use to create a range of music.
  - creating an art and mark making area with a variety of materials from other countries such as wood blocks for printing, calligraphy brushes etc.

- 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 and enable children to explore different gender identities/gender neutrality
- 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
- tapes with stories read in English and other languages
- 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
- labels for children's paintings or other work are made with their name in English and home language script (parents can help with this)
- 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 Stepping Stones 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 such as ethnicity or gender, 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 Stepping Stones we implement an equality strategy to foster a 'can do' approach

- We have an equality strategy in place outlining our vision on equality alongside a timetabled list of actions summarising how to build equality into the provision and how this is monitored and evaluated.
- An equality check and access audit are completed to ensure that there are no barriers to inclusion of any child, families and visitors to the setting.
- 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 Stepping Stones we promote dynamic and balanced mixed gender, culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse 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, gender reassignment 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.
- Members of staff of both sexes carry out all tasks according to their job description; there are no jobs that are designated men's or women's jobs.
- Staff are sensitive to the fact that male workers are under-represented in the early years workforce so may be more likely to experience inequality and discrimination.
- Staff should be aware that male workers may be more vulnerable to allegations. Therefore, work practices should be developed to minimise this. These practices are valuable for all staff.
- Where staff may feel threatened, or under attack, from discriminatory behaviour, staff and managers follow procedure 01.12 Threats and abuse towards staff and volunteers.
- 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 Stepping Stones 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 Stepping Stones 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.