

17. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Policy Statement

We will ensure that our service is fully inclusive and that no child, individual or family will be excluded from any of our activities on the grounds of age, gender, sexuality, class, family status, means disability, colour, ethnic origin, culture, religion or belief. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice to promote equality of opportunity and valuing diversity for all children and families.

We aim to:

- provide a secure and accessible environment in which all our children can flourish and in which all contributions are considered and valued;
- 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;
- encourage children to develop a sense of autonomy and independence;
- help children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers and with other adults;
- include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity;
- work with parents/carers to build their understanding of and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children;
- provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and disabled people;
- improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity; and
- ensure that all who wish to work in or volunteer to help with our Playgroup have an equal chance to do so.

Procedures

We have named Equal Opportunities Coordinators (CAROLYN COTTRELL and JUNE SLATTER) who has overall responsibility for our programme to ensure inclusion runs throughout all of our activities.

Admissions

- Feltwell Playgroup does not discriminate against a child or their family, or prevent entry to our setting, on the basis of colour, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, disability or social background;
- 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 advertise our service widely;
- We provide information in clear, concise language, whether in spoken or written form and reflect the diversity of our society in our publicity and promotional materials;
- We base our admissions policy on a fair system;
- We encourage all parents/carers to familiarise themselves with all our policies including our equal opportunities policy;
- We take action against any discriminatory behaviour by staff or parents/carers. 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 in the strongest manner;
- We offer a flexible payment system for families of differing means and offer information regarding sources of financial support.

Families

- Feltwell Playgroup is open to every family in the local and wider community;
- We recognise that many different types of family successfully love and care for children;
- We will endeavour to encourage and build trusting and supportive relationships among families, staff and volunteers in the group;
- 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/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.

Employment

- Posts are advertised and all applicants are judged against explicit and fair criteria;
- The applicant who best meets the criteria is offered the post, subject to references and checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. This ensures fairness in the selection process;
- Applicants are welcome from all backgrounds and posts are open to all. No applicant will be rejected on the grounds of age, gender, sexuality, class, means, family status, disability, colour, ethnic origin, culture, religion or belief;
- We may use the exemption clauses in relevant legislation to enable the service to best meet the needs of the community and will advertise positions and employ staff in line with our Safeguarding Policy;
- Commitment to promoting and implementing the groups Equal Opportunities Policy will form part of the job description for all workers;
- Employees may continue working at Playgroup until the government's statutory retirement age as long as they are fit and healthy and able to do the job as detailed in the employees' job description;
- All staff must be made aware and understand that anything they do - whether at Playgroup or outside of work - may reflect on how Playgroup is viewed and are therefore responsible for ensuring that they do not partake in anything that may be seen as bringing Playgroup into disrepute;
- We monitor our application process to ensure that it is fair and accessible.

Discriminatory Behaviour and/or Remarks

- These are unacceptable and staff should not make any such remarks in or out of the setting if they could be considered to be detrimental to the way Playgroup is viewed by parents/carers;
- We help children to understand that discriminatory behaviour and remarks are hurtful and unacceptable;
- In cases of serious misbehaviour, such as racial or other abuse, we make clear immediately the unacceptability of the behaviour and attitudes, by means of explanations rather than personal blame;
- Any response necessary will aim to be sensitive to the feelings of the victim(s) and to help those responsible to understand and overcome their prejudices.
- Parents/carers/ Guardians - Aggressive Behaviour and/or Discriminatory Remarks are unacceptable. We invite parents/carers to share any comments or concerns they have with the setting and staff, with us at the setting, so we can work in unison to resolve any issues. We understand comments are made BUT we will investigate any remarks in or out of the setting, if they could be considered to be detrimental to the way the Playgroup is viewed by others. There is a comment box available if you wish to share anonymously.

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;
- All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured;
- Activities and the use of play equipment offer children opportunities to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination. Opportunities will be given to children to explore, acknowledge and value similarities and differences between themselves and others;

- We ensure that the curriculum offered is inclusive of children with special educational needs and children with disabilities;
- We will differentiate the curriculum to meet children's special educational needs;
- We will ensure that children learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning and that wherever possible children speaking languages other than English are supported in the maintenance and development of their home languages.

Resources

- These are chosen to give children a balanced view of the world and an appreciation of the rich diversity of our multi-racial society;
- Materials will be selected to help children to develop their self-respect and respect other people by avoiding stereotypes and derogatory pictures or messages about any group of people.

Environment

- We aim to create an environment of mutual respect and tolerance;
- We aim to make our environment accessible to all. If access to the setting is found to treat anyone less favourably then we will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs;
- We ensure that children have equality of access to learning;
- We will make reasonable adjustments to the environment and resources to accommodate a wide range of learning, physical and sensory impairments;
- We make appropriate provision within the curriculum to ensure each child receives the widest possible opportunity to develop their skills and abilities, e.g. recognising the different learning styles of girls and boys;
- We aim to positively reflect the widest possible range of communities in the choice of resources and by celebrating a wide range of festivals;
- We avoid stereotypes and derogatory images in our selection of books and other visual materials.

Food

- We work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that the medical, cultural and dietary needs of children are met;
- We encourage healthy eating and offer advice on healthy lunchboxes;
- 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.

Committee 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, verbal and in translation - to ensure that all parents/carers have information about and access to them.

Monitoring and reviewing

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

Legal framework

- The Equality Act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, 2005
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1976, 1986
- Children Act 1989, 2004
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

This policy was adopted by

Feltwell Playgroup

On

19.03.2024

Date to be reviewed

(on or before) 19.03.2025

Signed on behalf of the provider

J.I.

Name of signatory

Jonathan Irving

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

Committee Chairperson