



Equalities and Diversity Policy

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Our Values

At Young Friends, inclusion is not a display — it is a daily practice. It lives in our language, curriculum, interactions, environment, and beliefs. We do not rely on tokenistic displays, themed multicultural corners, or superficial celebrations of diversity. Instead, we build a culture where identity is respected, challenge is welcomed, and everyone belongs.

- **Sustainability** – Equity means every child gets what they need to thrive
- **Respect** – Each person’s culture, identity, family structure and needs are honoured
- **Authenticity** – Diversity is lived, not laminated
- **Supportive Leadership** – Inclusion is guided, reflected upon and continuously developed
- **Community** – All children, families and staff contribute to a setting rooted in fairness, kindness and care

Policy Statement

We are committed to promoting equality, celebrating diversity and ensuring inclusion for every child, family and team member at Young Friends — regardless of background, identity, protected characteristic or need. This policy outlines how we actively uphold equality, diversity and anti-discriminatory practice across all areas of provision through respectful relationships, inclusive language, meaningful curriculum experiences and reflective pedagogy.

We recognise that inclusion is everyone’s responsibility and must be visible in everyday interactions, decision-making, communication, safeguarding and curriculum practice.

Legal Framework

We meet our duties under:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The SEND Code of Practice 2015
- The EYFS Statutory Framework 2024
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

We protect against discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of protected characteristics including:

- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Disability

- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity

We recognise that the Equality Act protects children, families and staff from discrimination relating to gender identity and gender reassignment. We are committed to ensuring all children and adults feel safe, respected and included within our setting.

Inclusive Practice and Identity Respect

At Young Friends, all children and families have the right to feel seen, respected and emotionally safe. We understand that children may express themselves in a wide variety of ways through play, clothing, interests, language and relationships.

Our role is not to impose stereotypes or assumptions, but to provide a respectful environment where children can develop a secure sense of self.

We therefore commit to the following practices:

- Children and adults will be addressed by their chosen name and pronouns wherever reasonably possible and appropriate
- Staff will respectfully correct themselves and others if incorrect names or pronouns are used
- Staff will never shame, ridicule or question a child's self-expression, appearance, interests or identity
- Staff will avoid making assumptions about children or families based on appearance, clothing, behaviour or family structure
- Staff will use inclusive, person-centred language in all conversations with children, colleagues and families
- Staff will avoid unnecessary gendered language and collective terms such as "boys and girls," "guys," "ladies," or "good boy/girl" when speaking to groups of children
- Instead, staff will use inclusive language such as "children," "friends," "everyone," "team," "kind humans," or use children's names where appropriate
- Staff will avoid reinforcing stereotypes such as linking toys, colours, emotions, activities or behaviours to gender
- Children will be free to access all areas of provision, resources and experiences without gender-based expectations
- Staff will model respectful curiosity, empathy and open-mindedness when discussing differences and identities
- Staff will speak factually, calmly and age-appropriately when children ask questions about bodies, families, identities or differences
- Conversations around identity will always remain developmentally appropriate, respectful and child-led

We recognise that families may hold differing personal, cultural or religious beliefs. We will always treat families respectfully while maintaining our legal responsibilities and our commitment to equality, inclusion and non-discriminatory practice.

Where parents or carers raise questions regarding pronouns, identity, inclusion or gender expression, staff will:

- Respond calmly, respectfully and without defensiveness
- Listen carefully to understand the concern or question
- Explain the setting's commitment to inclusion, equality and respectful language
- Reassure families that our approach is rooted in safeguarding, emotional wellbeing and respect for all children

- Refer complex concerns to senior leadership where appropriate
- Never engage in judgemental, political or dismissive discussions regarding protected characteristics

We recognise that some children may have family members who are transgender, non-binary or gender diverse, and some children may themselves express aspects of identity in different ways. All families and children must be treated with dignity and respect.

Inclusion in Our Loose Parts, Nature-Led Curriculum

We do not rely on structured role-play or pre-made small world toys to 'teach' diversity. Instead, we create a responsive, respectful environment where inclusion is woven naturally into daily life.

Books are our springboard

- We use high-quality, diverse children's literature as conversation starters
- Books are selected to reflect a wide range of family structures, cultures, identities, disabilities, appearances and experiences
- Children see themselves represented in stories and learn about the experiences of others
- Diverse representation is embedded throughout the year rather than limited to themed events or awareness days

Our team lead the dialogue

- Intelligent, observant practitioners identify opportunities to model inclusive language and respectful thinking
- Staff confidently respond to questions, challenge stereotypes and normalise difference
- We trust adults — not toys — to bring the world to life and promote inclusion through authentic conversation
- Staff recognise and challenge bias, stereotypes and exclusionary behaviour when it arises

Open-ended resources create space for imagination

- Loose parts offer no gendered rules or cultural limitations
- Children are free to represent, explore and invent from their own experiences and ideas
- Staff extend play sensitively, without imposing assumptions or limiting children's expression

We do not do tokenistic festivals

- We do not celebrate festivals as a tick-box exercise or because they are culturally dominant
- We celebrate only festivals that our children and families genuinely observe or that children have shown meaningful interest in
- We focus primarily on the seasons — winter, spring, summer and autumn — which all children can connect to
- This helps avoid exclusion and assumptions around cultural or religious participation
- We do not celebrate commercial events such as Halloween
- We do not celebrate Mother's Day or Father's Day in ways that assume all children have the same family structure
- Family discussions and creative experiences are adapted to include all significant caregivers and family arrangements

Respectful Relationships and Conversations

We actively encourage inclusive attitudes through our day-to-day culture and relationships.

- Children are supported to listen to each other, communicate respectfully and resolve conflict with support
- Staff model respectful conversation, empathy and curiosity about others

- Staff use inclusive, person-centred language that avoids gendered assumptions or stereotypes
- Differences are discussed calmly, positively and with the aim of understanding
- Respect for identity, family structure, culture, religion, disability and individual experience is taught and expected
- Hurtful language, exclusionary behaviour or discriminatory comments are always addressed appropriately and sensitively
- Staff support children to understand fairness, kindness, consent and emotional safety in age-appropriate ways
- Children are never shamed for asking questions; adults provide simple, factual and developmentally appropriate responses

Working with Families

We value strong partnerships with families and understand that respectful communication is essential to inclusive practice.

- We listen to families about what matters to them
- Pronouns, names, home languages and identities are respected
- We adapt food, sleep and care practices where reasonably possible and appropriate
- Families are encouraged to share information about culture, beliefs, identity and home life if they wish
- Concerns or questions about inclusion are always welcomed and responded to respectfully
- We will not tolerate discriminatory language, harassment or exclusionary behaviour from adults within the setting community
- Where disagreements arise, leaders will approach conversations calmly, professionally and in line with equality law and safeguarding responsibilities

Supporting Children with SEND

We provide fully inclusive, individualised support in line with our SEND Policy.

- Key person relationships support emotional security and belonging
- The environment is adapted to enable all children to participate meaningfully
- Staff use flexible, responsive approaches to support communication and emotional regulation
- We work collaboratively with external professionals where appropriate
- Every child is viewed as capable, unique and deserving of dignity and respect
- Staff understand that some children may experience overlapping barriers or discrimination and respond with sensitivity and understanding

Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Young Friends is committed to actively challenging discrimination rather than remaining neutral in the face of it.

- Staff challenge bias, stereotypes and discriminatory language calmly but clearly
- Children are not simply told to “be kind”; they are taught what respect, inclusion and empathy look like in practice
- Staff hold each other accountable for inclusive language and conduct
- Discriminatory behaviour, harassment, bullying or exclusion from adults or children is not tolerated
- Staff must never mock, dismiss or undermine a child’s identity, family structure, appearance, disability, culture, religion or protected characteristic
- Any concerns regarding discriminatory practice must be reported to leadership
- Persistent or serious breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary procedures

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Inclusion and safeguarding work together. Children cannot thrive where they do not feel emotionally safe, respected or protected from discrimination.

- Safeguarding concerns relating to discrimination, prejudice or identity-based bullying will always be taken seriously
- Information relating to a child or family's identity will be treated sensitively and shared only where necessary and appropriate
- Staff must never gossip or speculate about a child's identity, family circumstances or protected characteristics
- DSLs and leaders will support staff where complex safeguarding or equality matters arise

Leadership, Monitoring and Training

- Equality, diversity and inclusion are considered in staffing, recruitment, training and supervision
- Team reflection happens regularly during supervision, meetings and training
- Staff receive regular anti-bias, safeguarding and inclusive practice training
- Leaders monitor language, practice and curriculum provision to ensure this policy is consistently implemented
- Staff are expected to reflect, learn, adapt and grow professionally
- Leaders will address exclusionary or discriminatory practice promptly and professionally

Linked Policies

- SEND Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Curriculum Statement
- Supervision and Staff Development Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

Authorisation Signed

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