**Hingham Playgroup**

**Equal Opportunity**

**Within this policy we look at three strands of equal opportunity: valuing diversity and promoting equality; supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities and achieving positive behaviour.**

**Valuing diversity and promoting equality**

We will ensure that our service is fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children. We recognise that children and their families come from diverse backgrounds. All families have needs and values that arise from their social and economic, ethnic and cultural or religious backgrounds. Children grow up in diverse family structures that include two parent and one parent families; some children have two parents of the same sex. Some children have close links with extended families of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins while others may be more removed from close kin or may live with other relatives or foster carers. Some children have needs that arise from disability or impairment or may have parents that are affected by disability or impairment.

Some children come from families who experience social exclusion or severe hardship; some have to face discrimination and prejudice because of their ethnicity, the languages they speak, their religious or belief background, their gender or their impairment.

We understand that these factors affect the well-being of children and can impact on their learning and attainment.

Our setting is 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;
* include and value the contribution of all families to our understanding of equality and diversity;
* provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles and diverse family structures, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and disabled people;
* improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity;
* challenge and eliminate discriminatory actions;
* make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting; and
* foster good relations between all communities.

**Procedures**

***Admissions***

Our setting is open to all members of the community.

* We advertise our service widely.
* We reflect the diversity 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, when applicable.
* 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 a protected characteristic as defined by the Equalities Act 2010. These are:
	+ disability;
	+ race;
	+ gender reassignment;
	+ religion or belief;
	+ sex;
	+ sexual orientation;
	+ age;
	+ pregnancy and maternity; and
	+ marriage and civil partnership.
* We do not discriminate against a child with a disability or refuse a child entry to our setting for reason relating to disability.
* We develop an action plan to ensure that people with impairments 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 whether by:
	+ direct discrimination – someone is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic e.g. preventing families of some racial groups from using the service;
	+ indirect discrimination - someone is affected unfavourably by a general policy e.g. children must only speak English in the setting;
	+ association – discriminating against someone who is associated with a person with a protected characteristic e.g. behaving unfavourably to someone who is married to a person from a different cultural background.
	+ perception – discrimination on the basis that it is thought someone has a protected characteristic e.g. assuming someone is gay because of their mannerism or how they speak.
* 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.

***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.
* We may use the exemption clauses in relevant legislation 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 DBS checks. This ensures fairness in the selection process.
* All job descriptions include a commitment to promoting equality and recognising and respecting 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, which enable all children to flourish.
* We ensure that staff are confident and fully trained in administering relevant medicines and performing invasive care procedures when these are required.
* We review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our policy for promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusion.

***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.

Our environment is as accessible as possible for all visitors and service users. If access to the settings is found to treat disabled children or adults less favourably then we make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of disabled children and adults. We do this by:

* making children feel valued and good about themselves and others;
* ensuring that children have equality of access to learning;
* undertaking an access audit to establish if the setting is accessible to all children;
* making adjustments to the environment and resources to accommodate a wide range of learning, physical and sensory impairments;
* making 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;
* 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;
* differentiating the curriculum to meet children’s special educational needs;
* 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;
* ensuring that children learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and are supported in their learning; and
* ensuring that children speaking languages other than English are supported in the maintenance and development of their home languages.

***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 mothers, fathers and other 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.
* We take positive action to encourage disadvantaged and under-represented groups to use the setting.

***Food***

* We work in partnership with parents to ensure that dietary requirements of children that arise from their medical, religious or cultural needs are met.
* 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.

***Meetings***

* Meetings are arranged to ensure that all families who wish to may be involved in the running of the setting.
* We positively encourage fathers to be involved in the setting especially those fathers who do not live with the child.
* Information about meetings is communicated in a variety of ways - written, verbal and in translation - to ensure that all mothers and fathers have information about and access to the meetings.

***Monitoring and reviewing***

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

**Legal framework**

* The Equality Act 2010
* Children Act 1989, 2004
* Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

**Supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities**

**Policy statement**

We provide an environment in which all children, including those with special educational needs, are supported to reach their full potential.

* We have regard for the DfES Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2014).
* We ensure our provision is inclusive to all children with special educational needs.
* We support parents and children with special educational needs (SEN).
* We identify the specific needs of children with special educational needs and meet those needs through a range of SEN strategies.
* We work in partnership with parents and other agencies in meeting individual children's needs.
* We monitor and review our policy, practice and provision and, if necessary, make adjustments.

**Procedures**

* We designate a member of staff to be the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) and give his/her name to parents. Our SENCO is **Alison Austin**
* We ensure that the provision for children with special educational needs is the responsibility of all members of the setting.
* We ensure that our inclusive admissions practice ensures equality of access and opportunity.
* We use the graduated response system (Early Years Action, Early Years Action Plus and Statementing) for identifying, assessing and responding to children's special educational needs.
* We work closely with parents of children with special educational needs to create and maintain a positive partnership.
* We ensure that parents are informed at all stages of the assessment, planning, provision and review of their children's education.
* We provide parents with information on sources of independent advice and support.
* We liaise with other professionals involved with children with special educational needs and their families, including transfer arrangements to other settings and schools.
* We provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum for all children with special educational needs.
* We use a system of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing individual educational plans (IEPs) for children with special educational needs.
* We ensure that children with special educational needs are appropriately involved at all stages of the graduated response, taking into account their levels of ability.
* We have systems in place for supporting children during Early Years Action, Early Years Action Plus, Statutory Assessment and the Statementing process.
* We use a system for keeping records of the assessment, planning, provision and review for children with special educational needs.
* We provide resources (human and financial) to implement our Special Educational Needs Policy. (human resources dependent on funding)
* We raise awareness of any specialism the setting has to offer, e.g. Makaton trained staff.
* We ensure the effectiveness of our special educational needs provision by collecting information from a range of sources e.g. Individual Education Plan reviews, staff and management meetings, parental and external agencies views, inspections and complaints. This information is collated, evaluated and reviewed annually.
* We provide a complaints procedure.
* We monitor and review our policy annually.

**Achieving positive behaviour**

**Policy statement**

Our setting believes that children flourish best when their personal, social and emotional needs are met and where there are clear and developmentally appropriate expectations for their behaviour.

Children need to learn to consider the views and feelings, needs and rights, of others and the impact that their behaviour has on people, places and objects. This is a developmental task that requires support, encouragement, teaching and setting the correct example. The principles that underpin how we achieve positive and considerate behaviour exist within the programme for promoting personal, social and emotional development.

**Procedures**

We have a named person who has overall responsibility for our programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development, including issues concerning behaviour. In small settings this may be shared between co-staff.

* We require the named person to:
* keep her/himself up-to-date with legislation, research and thinking on promoting positive behaviour and on handling children's behaviour where it may require additional support;
* access relevant sources of expertise on promoting positive behaviour within the programme for supporting personal, social and emotional development; and
* check that all staff have relevant in-service training on promoting positive behaviour. We keep a record of staff attendance at this training.
* We recognise that codes for interacting with other people vary between cultures and require staff to be aware of - and respect - those used by members of the setting.
* We require all staff, volunteers and students to provide a positive model of behaviour by treating children, parents and one another with friendliness, care and courtesy.
* We familiarise new staff and volunteers with the setting's behaviour policy and its guidelines for behaviour.
* We expect all members of our setting - children, parents, staff, volunteers and students - to keep to the guidelines, requiring these to be applied consistently.
* We work in partnership with children's parents. Parents are regularly informed about their children's behaviour by their key person. We work with parents to address recurring inconsiderate behaviour, using our observation records to help us to understand the cause and to decide jointly how to respond appropriately.

***Strategies with children who engage in inconsiderate behaviour***

* We require all staff, volunteers and students to use positive strategies for handling any inconsiderate behaviour, by helping children find solutions in ways which are appropriate for the children's ages and stages of development. Such solutions might include, for example, acknowledgement of feelings, explanation as to what was not acceptable and supporting children to gain control of their feelings so that they can learn a more appropriate response.
* We ensure that there are enough popular toys and resources and sufficient activities available so that children are meaningfully occupied without the need for unnecessary conflict over sharing and waiting for turns.
* We acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.
* We support each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence.
* We support each child in developing a sense of belonging in our group, so that they feel valued and welcome.
* We avoid creating situations in which children receive adult attention only in return for inconsiderate behaviour.
* When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their action and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.
* We never send children out of the room by themselves, nor do we use a ‘naughty chair’ or a ‘time out’ strategy that excludes children from the group.
* We never use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking. Children are never threatened with these.
* We do not use techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children.
* We use physical restraint, such as holding, only to prevent physical injury to children or adults and/or serious damage to property.
* If all other methods of dealing with this inconsiderate behaviour do not achieve the desired outcome, children may be given 1-1 adult ‘time out’ support at an activity to allow calming a down period.
* We use incident forms to record any anti-social behaviour, these are shown to the parents and they are offered a copy. Originals are kept as part of records. Once shown to parents and before they are filed, the name of any child who was in receipt of anti-social behaviour is recorded on form to allow monitoring of ‘victimisation’.
* Details of such an event (what happened, what action was taken and by whom, and the names of witnesses) are brought to the attention of our setting leader and are recorded in the child’s personal file. The child’s parent is informed on the same day.
* 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.
* We do not shout or raise our voices in a threatening way to respond to children's inconsiderate behaviour.

***Children under three years***

* When children under three behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate and differ from those for older children.
* We recognise very young children are unable to regulate their own emotions, such as fear, anger or distress, and require sensitive adults to help them do this.
* Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting or fighting. Staff are calm and patient, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.
* If tantrums, biting or fighting are frequent, we try to find out the underlying cause - such as a change or upheaval at home, or frequent change of carers. Sometimes a child has not settled in well and the behaviour may be the result of ‘separation anxiety’.
* We focus on ensuring a child’s attachment figure in the setting, their key person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the child.

***Rough and tumble play, hurtful behaviour and bullying***

Our procedure has been updated to provide additional focus on these kinds of inconsiderate behaviours.

***Rough and tumble play and fantasy aggression***

Young children often engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play; some children appear pre-occupied with these themes, but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to hurtful behaviour or bullying, although it may be inconsiderate at times and may need addressing using strategies as above.

* We recognise that teasing and rough and tumble play are normal for young children and acceptable within limits. We regard these kinds of play as pro-social and not as problematic or aggressive.
* We will develop strategies to contain play that are agreed with the children, and understood by them, with acceptable behavioural boundaries to ensure children are not hurt.
* We recognise that fantasy play also contains many violently dramatic strategies, blowing up, shooting etc., and that themes often refer to ‘goodies and baddies’ and as such offer opportunities for us to explore concepts of right and wrong.
* We are able to tune in to the content of the play, perhaps to suggest alternative strategies for heroes and heroines, making the most of ‘teachable moments’ to encourage empathy and lateral thinking to explore alternative scenarios and strategies for conflict resolution.

***Hurtful behaviour***

We take hurtful behaviour very seriously. Most children under the age of five will at some stage hurt or say something hurtful to another child, especially if their emotions are high at the time, but it is not helpful to label this behaviour as ‘bullying’. For children under five, hurtful behaviour is momentary, spontaneous and often without cognisance of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt.

* We recognise that young children behave in hurtful ways towards others because they have not yet developed the means to manage intense feelings that sometimes overwhelm them.
* We will help them manage these feelings as they have neither the biological means nor the cognitive means to do this for themselves.
* We understand that self-management of intense emotions, especially of anger, happens when the brain has developed neurological systems to manage the physiological processes that take place when triggers activate responses of anger or fear.
* Therefore, we help this process by offering support, calming the child who is angry as well as the one who has been hurt by the behaviour. By helping the child to return to a normal state, we are helping the brain to develop the physiological response system that will help the child be able to manage his or her own feelings.
* We do not engage in punitive responses to a young child’s rage as that will have the opposite effect.
* Our way of responding to pre-verbal children is to calm them through holding and cuddling. Verbal children will also respond to cuddling to calm them down, but we offer them an explanation and discuss the incident with them to their level of understanding.
* We recognise that young children require help in understanding the range of feelings they experience. We help children recognise their feelings by naming them and helping children to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling. “Adam took your car, didn’t he, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn’t like it when he took it, did you? Did it make you feel angry? Is that why you hit him?” Older children will be able to verbalise their feelings better, talking through themselves the feelings that motivated the behaviour.
* We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact on others’ feelings. “When you hit Adam, it hurt him and he didn’t like that and it made him cry.”
* We help young children develop pro-social behaviour, such as resolving conflict over who has the toy. “I can see you are feeling better now and Adam isn’t crying any more. Let’s see if we can be friends and find another car, so you can both play with one.”
* We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing, and turn-taking develop. In order for both the biological maturation and cognitive development to take place, children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries.
* We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
* We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt.
* When hurtful behaviour becomes problematic, we work with parents to identify the cause and find a solution together. The main reasons for very young children to engage in excessive hurtful behaviour are that:
* they do not feel securely attached to someone who can interpret and meet their needs – this may be in the home and it may also be in the setting;
* their parent, or carer in the setting, does not have skills in responding appropriately, and consequently negative patterns are developing where hurtful behaviour is the only response the child has to express feelings of anger;
* the child may have insufficient language, or mastery of English, to express him or herself and may feel frustrated;
* the child is exposed to levels of aggressive behaviour at home and may be at risk emotionally, or may be experiencing child abuse;
* the child has a developmental condition that affects how they behave.
* Where this does not work, we use the Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to a Behaviour Support Team where necessary.

***Bullying***

We take bullying very seriously. Bullying involves the persistent physical or verbal abuse of another child or children. It is characterised by intent to hurt, often planned, and accompanied by an awareness of the impact of the bullying behaviour.

A child who is bullying has reached a stage of cognitive development where he or she is able to plan to carry out a premeditated intent to cause distress in another.

Bullying can occur in children five years old and over and may well be an issue in after school clubs and holiday schemes catering for slightly older children.

If a child bullies another child or children:

* we show the children who have been bullied that we are able to listen to their concerns and act upon them;
* we intervene to stop the child who is bullying from harming the other child or children;
* we explain to the child doing the bullying why her/his behaviour is not acceptable;
* we give reassurance to the child or children who have been bullied;
* we help the child who has done the bullying to recognise the impact of their actions;
* we make sure that children who bully receive positive feedback for considerate behaviour and are given opportunities to practise and reflect on considerate behaviour;
* we do not label children who bully as ‘bullies’;
* we recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying themselves, or be subject to abuse or other circumstance causing them to express their anger in negative ways towards others;
* we recognise that children who bully are often unable to empathise with others and for this reason we do not insist that they say sorry unless it is clear that they feel genuine remorse for what they have done. Empty apologies are just as hurtful to the bullied child as the original behaviour;
* we discuss what has happened with the parents of the child who did the bullying and work out with them a plan for handling the child's behaviour; and
* we share what has happened with the parents of the child who has been bullied, explaining that the child who did the bullying is being helped to adopt more acceptable ways of behaving.
* We record those children on the receiving end of antisocial behaviour on incidents forms, and monitor these forms to observe any patterns of ‘bullying’.

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| Last review date | March 2022 |
| Reviewed/agreed by staff team / date |  |
| Reviewed/agreed by committee/date |   |
| Signed on behalf of committee |  |
| Print name/date/role |  |
| Date of next review |  March 2022 |

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