



## Equality of Opportunity - Valuing Diversity and Promoting Equality

### **Policy Statement**

Whitsers 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.

Whitsers 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.

### **Admissions**

Whitsers is open to every family in the community. The waiting list is operated on an academic year system, but with opportunity for this to be by-passed under unusual circumstances and at the discretion of the Committee and Play Leader. We advertise our setting widely. We base our Admissions Policy (see separate 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;

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- 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 a curriculum to ensure that ALL children and adults in the setting can participate successfully in the services offered by the setting and participate fully in all activities 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; or
- 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**

Any vacancies will be advertised. The Chair, Play Leader and Deputy Play Leader will interview applicants with other Committee members if appropriate. Commitment to implementing playgroup's Equal Opportunities Policy will form part of the job description for all workers. 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 checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. 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**

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At Whitsers we offer training opportunities for staff /committee 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 have a designated ENCO (Educational Needs Co-ordinator) who will review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our policy for promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusion.

### **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 – further details are given below. 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.

### **The Curriculum**

At Whitsers we aim to show respectful awareness of the major events and traditions in the lives of children throughout the world, particularly those of the children and families attending playgroup and in our society as a whole, and we welcome the diversity of backgrounds from which they come.

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.

We ensure 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;

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- 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.

### Resources

These will be chosen to give children a balanced view of the world and an appreciation of the rich diversity of our multi-cultural society. They feature positive images of people, both male and female, from a range of ethnic and cultural groups, with and without disabilities.

Materials will be selected to help children to develop their self-respect and to respect other people by using images and words that reflect positively the contribution of all members of society.

### Special Educational Needs

Whitsers aims to provide a welcoming and appropriate learning opportunity for all our children. Planning for playgroup meetings and events will take into account the needs of people with special educational needs and disabilities. If a child is to attend playgroup who requires specific resources, equipment or materials to assist them, playgroup will ensure these are in place prior to the child starting. Should specific equipment or training be required prior to a child attending, the place may have to be deferred until these arrangements have been made.

### Language

Information, written and spoken, will be clearly communicated, and every effort will be made to allow those for whom English is not a first language to receive the necessary help to allow them to fully take part in life at Whitsers. Research suggests that children learning English as a second language learn more quickly if their first language is also recognised at playgroup, for example, by using books, CD’s, some written words and maybe some spoken words, and we would welcome parental help in providing these. If we have a child attending Whitsers who requires Braille, we will endeavour to ensure appropriate equipment & resources are in place prior to the child starting. Should specific equipment be required prior to a child attending, the place may have to be deferred until these arrangements have been made.

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## 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.

## Monitoring and reviewing

We ensure our policies and procedures remain effective we will monitor and review them regularly to ensure our strategy meets the overall aims to promote equality, inclusion and valuing diversity. We provide a Complaints Policy and Procedure.

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