

(Book 2)

Equality & Diversity Policy

Last Review July 2021	Next Review April 2023	Coordinator Head Teacher	Nominated Trustee EC&T Committee
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Introduction

The Mulberry Bush School embraces the diversity of the children it works with, their families and their professional networks, and of other stakeholders and its workforce. Our staff, our children and all visitors should expect to be treated fairly and with dignity.

We believe that to take no action on issues of equality and diversity is to collude with the current inequalities present. We must work to recognise, address and reduce the prejudices in society and our organisation, which are rooted in both history and in the anxieties and difficult feelings we all have, and struggle to face. We are committed to always be working towards greater equality. If we do not do this work, we contribute to the harm these difficulties cause.

We recognise that to achieve success in this area we have to acknowledge and address the bias and privilege inherent where one group is in a dominant position. This is in accordance with the psychodynamic and systemic principles which underpin our work.

This policy addresses Equality and Diversity in relation to child members of the community. Staff matters are dealt with in the staff handbook. This is to aid clarity - in reality these issues need to be seen and addressed as a whole.

Aims

At the Mulberry Bush School, we believe that all children should be treated as individuals. To achieve this, it is important that attention is paid to the ethnic and cultural needs of the children. In particular, we must recognise and remain aware of the needs of children who come from a background in some way different from the backgrounds of the majority of the staff team. Such a strategy needs to be integrated into all aspects of our provision: treatment, play, discipline, education, care, assessment, resources and staffing. The School recognises that preservation of a child's ethnic and cultural heritage is an inherent right.

Procedure

It is essential that assumptions are not made on the basis of children's backgrounds or any form of categorisation or labelling, nor should our preconceptions or current working practices prevent us from carefully considering any diagnoses or assessments already carried out with children or families.

Following the assessment of a child as they start at the school, all staff working with the children should have a good understanding of the child's needs and how they may differ from others. It may be appropriate to seek services and personal contacts in the community that will support the meeting of these needs.

For all children, the Integrated Treatment Plan needs to recognise their particular physical and social needs related to any and all aspects of diversity. This aims to ensure that children

- Develop a positive identity
- Develop necessary linguistic, cultural, religious, social, self-care or other skills to function effectively as an adult in society.
- Acquire skills to cope as both a child and adult in a society in which they may encounter prejudice.

PREJUDICE

Working with issues of prejudice in any setting is both vital and challenging work. At the MBS we live and work with children who have experienced serious disruptions to their primary care and nurture. Consequently, they often have an immature sense of self and their self-worth. The children placed at the school for specialist care, education and treatment, or supported by the organisation, find it very difficult to contain their own strong feelings and raw emotions. Therefore, when upset, they will use many forms of abuse to express their own hurt and make others feel the impact of that hurt. Prejudiced language is one such form of abuse. Our view is that when a child uses such language, even in an unintentional and unthinking way, it is the role of adults to explain to them that any abuse is unacceptable and that we continually need help to own our hurtful feelings rather than put them onto others. We also need to feel empowered to explain to children that prejudiced language inherently carries with it destructive and manipulative societal implications, which none of us should accept, if we are engaged in helping children to grow into caring future parents and citizens.

We will promote a clear understanding of what prejudice is. We aim to deal with prejudice in the following ways:

- A whole school approach to tackling prejudice, led by the Privilege & Prejudice Group, through education, positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour, appropriate use of sanctions and monitoring of incidents of prejudice, racism and racist language.
- By providing a clear, unambiguous statement of opposition to any form of prejudiced behaviours which firmly explains the wrong done. This may be

done individually or in the case of repeated offence, by a panel of members of staff meeting with the child.

- By developing opportunities within the school to promote and celebrate diversity and difference.
- By developing a positive, diverse environment and a curriculum, which is multicultural, taking account of the ethnic composition of the school, the age and stage of the pupils and staying in touch with societal norms.
- By providing support for the victims of prejudiced abuse, in the form of space and opportunity for those involved to talk, process and become involved with sanctions and ways forward.
- Bringing the people involved in an incident together to think about the real meaning of what is being communicated, in order to develop an understanding of how to appropriately address the individual needs of the children and adults concerned.

What do we understand racism to be?

The concept of racism is a complex one. Misunderstanding can arise because of the emotional responses, which often underlie the positions taken by individuals whenever the issue is discussed. Racism is based upon the assumption that any person because of their race is deemed to be inferior by another. It encompasses prejudice and discrimination, deliberately or through ignorance and/or unexamined beliefs. It is concerned with historical and cultural factors and poor representation of certain ethnicities through negative or stereotypical and distorted images in the media, books and other learning resources. Racism manifests itself in the following ways:

- Open hostility to a person/group of people on grounds of race or colour
- Lack of consideration to differences in culture, tradition and belief
- Personal abuse, verbally written or inferred by an individual or group
- Discrimination of the tasks or opportunities people are given because of their race or colour
- Derogatory name-calling, insults and racist jokes
- Making threats against a person, because of colour or ethnicity

WORK TO BE DONE FOLLOWING A RACIST INCIDENT

In line with the principles described above, the work to be done following a racist incident can be described under the following headings. Note that these can often be combined in interactions with children, indeed that is often effective practice. However, staff members should ensure they have considered all these ways of working following a racist incident and that they have a balanced approach. A rush to use sanctions and apportion blame can leave both victims and those using

racist abuse feeling unheard and unsupported. Equally an approach which does not clearly reinforce what is wholly unacceptable may leave all involved feeling unsafe and so uncontained.

Given the nature of the difficulties of MBS children, incidents between children often cannot be clearly described as having a victim and an aggressor. Where children have taunted each other in an escalating 'tit-for-tat', or a child who is older or larger seeks to dominate a newer / younger child, one child may use racist language as a particularly potent form of abuse. In these circumstances, while continuing to stress the absolute unacceptability of racism, we must bear in mind the needs, capabilities and responsibilities of all the children involved.

Work with the victims

Immediate support:

Any child who has been insulted or abused should be offered comfort and a recognition of the pain they may be feeling. While it is often necessary to immediately work with the most abusive or aggressive child when intervening in an incident, it is important to meet the less aggressive children's / victims' needs as soon as possible.

Experiencing something being done:

Following a racist incident, children who have been upset, either through being abused or as part of a group being affected, should be kept informed in general terms of the work being done with, and any sanctions imposed on, the aggressors. This may mean a number of children being kept informed about the work being done with each other.

Resilience work:

Racist or other abuse can be damaging to self-esteem and self-image. Children should be offered activities which aim to help them recognise that they are victims, that what has been said and done is not a reflection on them and that the community as a whole values and supports them. They should also be supported to reflect on what has happened and to develop appropriate coping strategies. Note that this is not about suggesting that children should in any way 'put up' with racism but about recognising that there is racism in society and that minority ethnic individuals may need to develop ways to effectively manage when they encounter it.

Work with the child who is racist

Immediate disapproval:

Children using racist language should receive an immediate and clear message that their language is unacceptable. Any immediate actions should support the victim of racism and should support the work outlined below to begin. It may be effective to quickly engage the child in reflecting on the incident and making reparation, or it may be effective to give minimal attention and role model a focus on positive behaviour.

Reflective Work:

Opportunities must be found for the child to think and talk with adults, and with peers where effective and appropriate, about both the hurt they cause to others and the thoughts and feelings which lead them to be racist. These can be structured or ad hoc but should be actively pursued. This work should aim to support restorative work between the children involved - see below.

When racism becomes a repeated issue, children may be involved in a series of racism workshops over three sessions to try to tackle some of the issues underpinning the racism, to consider the impact it is having and find a way to reduce incidents. See referral process below.

Education:

Children may be led to educate themselves, with the help of members of staff, through conversation, books and other resources which address the area of prejudice. Children may be asked to talk about the meaning of racist behaviours and consider its impact.

Communication with Families and Networks

As with all significant areas of work, it is the responsibility of the treatment team to keep carers and professionals informed about incidents and the work being done to follow up. All members of staff should support this task through clear recording and communication.

Work involving both children

Restorative Work:

Relationships are a key aspect of our care, education and treatment work. A restorative meeting (see MBS guidelines for restorative meetings) should be considered and convened if this is judged to be effective. This should be coordinated by the leaders of the treatment teams of the children involved and facilitated by a suitable adult. This may be most effective if relatively informal and chaired by a member of a household or class team for a one-off incident but should be a more structured meeting chaired by a member of the Treatment Team for a more serious or repeated incident. If this is a more formal meeting which takes place sometime after the incident *all those involved should receive appropriate support and preparation.*

Work with a wider group of children

The use of racist language affects the group of children who live alongside those directly involved. Where individual children are being worked with as above, the wider group should be clear why their peers are being separated or asked to do different activities. Children should be encouraged to distance themselves from any use of abusive language and supported to find acceptable ways to express anger or other feelings. Racist or other abuse is a suitable topic for group discussion in all areas of the school.

One of the key issues behind racism is a lack of knowledge and understanding of differences, culture and traditions. Within the school, some of the ways we aim to promote a positive and multi-cultural environment and curriculum include:

Within the classroom

- Topics that deal both explicitly and implicitly with cultural and ethnic issues. Explicit topics have included Respecting Difference, looking at how people live in different cultures, and various historical topics.
- A whole school initiative, celebrating diversity across the world, including a focus on positive role models and significant historical figures.
- Circle times and discussion forums which allow children to listen, explore, discuss and challenge views and opinions, clarify thoughts and ideas.
- Celebration and teaching of different faiths and their major festivals during RE lessons.
- The provision of a range of resources and materials including books, videos, posters and artwork, which represent a multi-ethnic society.

Content is varied according to the emotional levels of the children. The youngest children are encouraged to value all people of all races and cultures and are helped towards avoidance of stereotypes and misrepresentations. As children progress through the school, they are encouraged to develop analytical skills and engage in an understanding of cross-cultural perspectives and values.

Within the living groups

- The provision of a range of multicultural books, pictures, posters, toys and games within each household.
- Themed and cultural meals cooked and shared with the children on a regular basis.
- Home visits by members of the team to gather information on the cultural needs of each child.
- The application of a clear system of sanctions for racist behaviour.
- The modelling of appropriate and culturally sensitive behaviour.
- By providing secondary experiences (opportunities to attend clubs and societies in the local community), careful thought is given to cultural and ethnic needs and issues, and the matching of activity/group to child is considered.
- By providing opportunities where possible for children to attend places of worship.
- Making good use of the wide variety of countywide resources available.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES, CARERS, PROFESSIONALS AND OTHERS

We will actively and consistently apply our values and policy in relation to equality and diversity in all our relationships and work with networks and others. We expect our staff and, as far as they are able, the children at the school to approach all those they come in contact with respectfully and equally. This means we are committed to the following:

- We discuss the provision and ensure we make adaptations to meet agreed and identified needs of the children at the school.
- We are open to ideas and communications about our relationships. We will value feedback and discussion.
- We value and respect the views and opinions of everybody involved in the lives of the children we work with.
- We will investigate complaints and allegations of discrimination, prejudiced abuse or other difficulties relating to equality and diversity promptly and thoroughly, and will communicate our findings and responses to all concerned clearly and as quickly as possible. See also the school's policy on complaints and the staff handbook.
- Where we believe others are demonstrating discrimination or prejudice we will share our concerns and seek to constructively engage with others to address this.

Where a child exhibits racially intolerant behaviour, we will undertake work with families to explore and inform their knowledge to support their re-education and that of their children.

CARING FOR CHILDREN FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES

At the Mulberry Bush School, we believe that all children should be treated as individuals. However, it is important that particular attention is paid to the needs of children from ethnic minorities. Such a strategy needs to be integrated into all aspects of our provision, play, discipline, education, assessment, staffing. The school recognises that preservation of the child's ethnic and cultural heritage is an inherent right.

It is essential that assumptions are not made on the basis of children's background. During the assessment of a child, the Cultural Toolkit should be completed and all staff working with the children should have a good understanding of the child's needs and how they may differ from others. It may be appropriate to seek services and personal contacts in the community that will support the child's ethnicity.

For the ethnic minority child, the Integrated Treatment Plan needs to recognise the different physical and social needs in relation to food, hair and skin care, clothing, religion, education and history in order for the child to:

- Develop a positive identity for him or herself within his / her ethnicity.
- Develop necessary linguistic, cultural, religious and social skills to function effectively as an adult in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society.
- To acquire skills to cope as both a child and adult in a society in which they are likely to encounter racism and prejudice.

Role of the Trustee Body

Trustees should be aware of the importance of equality and diversity. They should be alert to the need to identify any instances of racism and make sure that these are followed up.

Role of the School Leadership Team

The School Leadership Team (SLT)

The SLT holds responsibility for reviewing this policy and achieving its aims. As it is responsible and accountable for the development of diversity and equality awareness within the school, all members of the SLT will ensure that they lead by example and monitor the work of their teams.

Managers

All managers are responsible for implementing and enforcing this policy and ensuring that their teams are aware of their responsibilities. Managers will 1) promote, respect and encourage each member of their team to reach their full potential as well as deal appropriately with any breach of the policy and 2) ensure that this policy and the values underlying it are actively employed in all aspects of care, education and treatment.

Role of Staff

RESPONSIBILITIES

Whilst all members of the Mulberry Bush School team have a collective responsibility to ensure that this policy is live and adhered to, there are specific responsibilities which need to be defined:

All Employees including Trustees

All employees of The Mulberry Bush School have a personal responsibility for adhering to this policy. This can be achieved by respecting one's colleagues and the children, and allowing everybody to live or work in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination by promoting the appropriate behaviours and challenging anybody who falls short of these expectations.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The training dept. will ensure that training needs of the staff group in relation to equality and diversity work with the children and their networks are identified and these areas developed. More generally the school's commitment to equality will be reflected in all training offered, including any training provided by external providers.

Where individual children have particular needs, the training department. will work with the members of staff involved to ensure those members of staff have, or can access, training and resources to enable them to meet those needs.