**The Willow Tree Children’s Centre**

**Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy**

## Rationale and Policy Considerations

This Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy specifies the way The Willow Tree Children’s Centre ensures that the needs (including the physical, emotional and intellectual needs) and the religious beliefs (if any) of all children attending are accommodated.

‘Participation in inclusive high-quality early childhood settings enhances all children’s early learning experiences. In an inclusive setting there is an awareness and respect for each child’s individual strengths and areas of difficulty. Inclusive settings engage in meaningful collaboration with parents/guardians and other professionals to ensure access, equality and full participation for all children.’

[*Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016)

All forms of early years service provision should be

‘…without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his/her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status’.

*U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* 2.1

The purpose of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy is to ensure that:

* The service is a place where everyone, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances, feels safe, feels a sense of belonging, is respected and valued and has their individual needs understood and met as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided.
* In line with Aistear and Síolta, the curriculum/programme reflects the identities of all children and recognises their abilities and interests.
* All children are enabled to meaningfully participate in all aspects of the curriculum/programme, and learning is extended to challenge and promote the individual child’s abilities and development.
* That service planning and provision embraces the needs of all children and works to deliver an inclusive and accessible environment for all.
* Children of all abilities have equal access to culturally and developmentally appropriate play-based educational activities, both indoors and outdoors, which develop their understanding, dispositions, skills and holistic development.
* Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators and experts on their child, and the smooth transitioning from home to the early childhood care and education setting is supported.
* The service works in partnership with parents, families and the wider community to promote equality of opportunity and to oppose all forms of bias, oppressive behaviour, prejudice and discrimination.
* The service provides opportunities that help develop children’s sense of personal and group identity so that they can become confident, open to difference, receptive to change and respectful towards other identities.
* The service enables children and staff members to have the confidence and skills to challenge instances of prejudice and discrimination.
* Children and staff members are equipped to understand that reason, logic, respect and sensitivity have to underpin ways and means of resolving arguments and conflicts.
* Equality of opportunity is an integral part of all planning and decision making within the service.
* The service operates inclusive recruitment practices

[Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) (DCYA, 2016)

The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy has implications for most aspects of service provision including:

* The Workplace – diversity among the workforce and interaction between staff members.
* Management of Human Resources – Employment - advertising; recruitment; selection; interviewing; promotion; access to training and other employee benefits
* Admissions – Considering content and wording of application forms; offers of places; waiting lists; criteria.
* Resources – Carefully evaluating all the materials and equipment in the setting for messages about diversity – omissions; stereotypes; accuracy; knowledge of appropriate uses of resources. Determining which materials stay; which need to be sourced to ensure inclusion and a sense of belonging; which need to be modified and which should be taken out because of their stereotypical or inaccurate content.
* Pedagogy and Learning Styles – Taking account of the different learning styles which the children in the group use to concentrate, process and retain information when planning activities and programmes.
* Curriculum/Programme – Ensuring equal access to the curriculum/programme for all children. Considering the physical layout of rooms; visible representations of diversity; the individual needs of children with physical and/or intellectual disabilities; the needs of children learning English as an additional language – valuing home languages and dialects, understanding bilingualism. How the curriculum/programme incorporates an anti-bias approach and a way to counter the learning of negative attitudes and behaviour towards difference, talking openly about differences. Considering whether specific action needs to be taken to address inequalities. Ensuring that there is a basic understanding and knowledge of the beliefs and faiths of the children and families in the setting, considering whether specific action is needed to involve everyone, questioning and evaluating the purpose of celebrating festivals relevant to the users of the service.
* Guiding Behaviour – Addressing issues such as bullying, inappropriate body language, harassment, name-calling.
* Communication – Ensuring that all parents/guardians and staff members are able to communicate clearly with one another (‘Plain English’[[1]](#footnote-2)/translation/interpretation etc. where necessary).
* Assessment – Ensuring no form of assessment discriminates unjustifiably.
* Funding – Identifying any funding that may be available to implement the policy and/or to ensure there is no discrimination.
* Training – Ensuring that all training needs relevant to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion are identified and included in the budget and that appropriate training is provided for all staff members.

Policy Statement

*At The Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we provide a high quality service which ensures that all children, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances, feels safe, welcomed, respected and valued. We recognise and respect the rights of all adults and children in our service. We value the ability, individuality and cultural background of all children by providing each child with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential as active learner within an inclusive ethos/culture (as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided). We aim to actively promote equality of access and participation and eliminate discrimination on grounds of, gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Travelling Community. This policy represents the agreed principles and commitment for inclusion, in line with Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter.*

Procedures & Practices

* *The Willow Tree Children’s Centre is committed to working in partnership with parents to support children’s ability, identity, cultural background and sense of belonging. We will support families in their parenting role and respect their values and beliefs about child-rearing.*
* *We provide parents with information on sources of independent advice and support.*
* *We liaise with other professionals involved with children with SEN/disabilities and their families, including transfer arrangements to other settings and schools.*
* *We will support children to become respectful of difference and foster each child’s critical thinking in order to confront bias and discrimination.*
* *We will implement a broad, balanced curriculum that meets the individual needs and emerging interests of the child under Síolta, The National Quality Framework (2006) and Aistear: The National Curriculum Framework (2009) and respond to children’s diverse and individual learning needs and styles through an emerging curriculum.*
* *We will respond appropriately and sensitively to any additional needs a child may experience. Additional needs may include any change introduced into the child’s life, such as a new sibling, moving house, absent parent/s, or a situation that may call for a long-term care plan, such as asthma, allergies, disability, development delay and medical conditions.*
* *We will support continual development for all early childhood practitioners so as to ensure they are trained in an equality and diversity approach to providing care and education to all.*
* *We will ensure fair and equal opportunities for all potential and existing employees in line with our Recruitment Policy.*
* *We ensure that our inclusive admissions practice ensures equality of access and opportunity.*
* *We ensure that our physical environment is as far as possible suitable for children with disabilities.*
* *We ensure the privacy of children with additional needs/disabilities when intimate care is being provided.*
* *We provide a complaints procedure.*
* *We monitor and review our policy annually.*

*All children attending The Willow Tree Children’s Centre are supported to:*

* Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
* Know they belong and are valued as unique individuals
* Feel strong and confident about their identity
* Know their cultural backgrounds are respected and valued
* Learn in groups that allow them all to experience success
* Engage with materials and experiences that reflect a range of social and cultural

backgrounds, gender and ability (visitors, books, music, musical instrument, cooking

activities, craft, clothing, multicultural dolls, multicultural jigsaws, games, play equipment,

posters and other props.

* Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
* Participate fully, having particular regard for and being cognisant of children with a variety of disabilities
* Respect the purpose for which other children’s aids or assistive technology are intended.
* Access a safe environment that facilitates, supports and encourages a positive individual and group identity.
* Gain equal access to a differentiated and full curriculum/programme that caters for their individual and particular needs.

*Families attending the centre are supported to:*

* Consult with the service about the care of each child to minimise conflict between the

service’s philosophy and family values.

* Be involved in policy and procedure development to ensure cultural sensitivities are

included.

* Access information about the service and the policies and procedures by translating

information into their home language if necessary.

* Participate in the service’s programme and to introduce their culture’s food, art, music,

language, celebrations and dress to the other children in the service.

*Early years educators will promote equality, diversity and inclusion. They will:*

* Remove assumptions, judgements and expectations about the cultural and linguistic

backgrounds of all families and the team.

* Regard all individuals equally, showing sensitivity and providing equal opportunities for all

children of all background.

* Actively intervene in situations when bias is shown and encourage children to challenge bias
* Demonstrate positive attitudes when making changes to accommodate all children. Work as

a team with parents and other professionals to develop, carry out and review plans for

children with additional support needs.

* Adhere to the National Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter.

**Dealing with Discriminatory Incidents:**

* The first step in handling incidents involving discrimination is to recognise and acknowledge

what is happening.

* All children will be informed that name-calling or physically hurting someone is

unacceptable.

* When an incident occurs (hurtful remark made by one child to another) both children learn

from the incident. The response to the incident will reference the rules of the service as

appropriate.

* Staff will endeavour to determine the real reason for incidents involving exclusion or

conflict. It may not be a discriminatory incident, so staff will be careful not to make

assumptions.

* Some issues may be brought into the early childhood service by the child, arising from

comments made by adults outside the service. Staff will recognise when it is an adult issue,

and identify appropriate actions for addressing the issue with the child’s parents or

guardians.

* An incident should be considered from the perspective of all individuals involved as well as

those who witnessed it. Appropriate actions need to be taken, at circle time or in group

discussions, in order to address incidents witnessed by children who were not involved. This

does not mean singling children out in the group.

* By showing empathy and expressing our feelings, we help children to express their feelings.

It is important to be aware of how our own attitudes can shape how we respond to a given

situation. All staff will be mindful that early childhood practitioners are role models for the

children and the early childhood service. Children will do as we do. (The éist manual- Ar an

mBealach, 2010, Pavee Point)

**The Inclusion Co-ordinator within our service is the Manager Laura MacKenna.**

## Communication Plan [For staff & families]

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Diversity, Equality and Inclusion on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy will be included in the Parent/Guardian Handbook and the full policy is available on the website www.blennerville.playschool.com

This policy will also be reviewed with staff at induction and annual staff training. When a complaint is received, the person making the complaint will be given a copy of this Policy and Procedures.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians upon request.

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/guardians and the staff team will receive written notification of any updates.

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter (2016), the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2011, the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2012, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 29 & 30), the Disability Act 2005 and the Special Needs Legislation – EPSEN Act 2004, and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of Pre-school and school-age Services) Regulations 2018.

*More information on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion is included in the Diversity, Equality and*

*Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education (Department of Children*

*and Youth Affairs, 2016).*

This policy was reviewed and adopted by The Willow Tree Children’s Centre on 1st January 2024.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of Management

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**Person in Charge:** Laura MacKenna

**Deputy Person in Charge**: Lisa Clifton

1. See NALA Plain English Guidelines at a Glance: [www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Plain%20English%20guidelines%20at%20a%20glance\_1.pdf](http://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Plain%20English%20guidelines%20at%20a%20glance_1.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)