



Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Special educational needs

Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities.

9.1 Valuing Diversity and Promoting Inclusion and Equality

Policy statement

Impact Montessori Nursery is committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming and non-discriminatory environment in which every child and family is respected, valued and treated fairly.

We recognise that children and their families come from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, communities and family circumstances. Families may include one or two parents, same-sex or different-sex parents, grandparents, extended family members, foster carers, adoptive parents, kinship carers or other significant adults.

We recognise that children and families may experience disadvantage, discrimination or barriers to participation because of disability, race, ethnicity, language, religion or belief, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, family circumstances, socioeconomic disadvantage or other aspects of their identity or circumstances.

Impact Montessori Nursery is committed to anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and inclusive practice. We recognise that discrimination, prejudice and exclusion can negatively affect children's wellbeing, sense of belonging, learning, development and life outcomes.

Our aim is to ensure that every child:

- feels safe, valued, respected and included;
- has equal access to learning, play and opportunities;
- is supported according to their individual needs;
- sees themselves, their family and their community positively reflected in the setting;
- develops respect for others and an understanding of difference; and
- is protected from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.

We will actively challenge racism, prejudice, stereotyping and discriminatory behaviour and will work in partnership with families and relevant professionals to promote equality and inclusion.

Aims

Impact Montessori Nursery aims to:

- promote equality of opportunity and value diversity;
- create a positive, inclusive and non-stereotyping environment;
- foster respect, dignity, kindness and understanding;
- ensure that every child and family feels welcome and included;
- recognise and celebrate the diversity of the children, families and communities we serve;
- challenge discrimination, prejudice, racism, harassment, bullying and victimisation;
- provide reasonable adjustments for disabled children and adults where required;
- identify and reduce barriers to participation;
- support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND);
- support children who speak English as an additional language (EAL);
- promote positive attitudes towards different cultures, identities, family structures, abilities and beliefs;
- ensure that staff understand their responsibilities under equality and safeguarding legislation;
- provide fair and accessible recruitment and employment practices; and
- regularly review our practice to identify and address inequality or disadvantage.

Protected characteristics

We will not discriminate unlawfully against a child, parent, carer, visitor, volunteer or member of staff because of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in relevant circumstances and places duties on service providers concerning discrimination and reasonable adjustments. ([Legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

The nursery will also challenge other forms of unfair treatment, prejudice or exclusion that may not fall within a specific protected characteristic where these negatively affect children, families or staff.

Admissions

Our nursery is open and accessible to children and families within the community in accordance with our admissions arrangements.

- We operate a fair and transparent admissions process.
- We do not unlawfully discriminate against a child or family when considering admission or providing our services.
- We will provide information about the nursery in clear and accessible formats wherever reasonably practicable.

- Where appropriate, information may be provided in alternative formats or with additional communication support.
- We will consider reasonable adjustments to enable disabled children and adults to access our services.
- We will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand individual needs before a child starts where this information is available and appropriate.
- We will consider whether additional resources, adaptations, specialist equipment or professional advice may be required to enable a child to participate fully.
- We will not refuse admission solely because a child has SEND where the nursery can reasonably meet the child's needs.
- We will ensure that families are aware of our equality, inclusion and SEND arrangements.
- We will take reasonable steps to ensure that our admissions and settling-in arrangements are accessible and inclusive.

Reasonable adjustments and accessibility

Impact Montessori Nursery recognises its responsibility to remove or reduce barriers that may place disabled children or adults at a substantial disadvantage.

Reasonable adjustments may include, where appropriate:

- adapting the physical environment;
- changing the way information is communicated;
- providing information in an alternative format;
- adapting activities or routines;
- providing additional time or support;
- adapting communication methods;
- providing appropriate equipment or resources;
- making changes to policies or procedures; and
- seeking advice from appropriate professionals.

Adjustments will be considered on an individual basis and in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals.

We will regularly review the accessibility of the environment, resources and curriculum.

Anti-discrimination and anti-racist practice

Impact Montessori Nursery will actively challenge racism and all forms of discriminatory behaviour.

Discrimination may include:

Direct discrimination

Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

Applying a rule, practice or requirement that places people sharing a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage, unless it can be objectively justified where the law permits this.

Discrimination arising from disability

Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something arising from their disability, unless the treatment can be justified in accordance with the law.

Discrimination by association

Treating someone unfavourably because they are associated with another person who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination based on perception

Treating someone unfavourably because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.

Harassment

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation

Treating someone unfairly because they have made, supported or been involved in a complaint or action relating to discrimination.

The nursery will also actively challenge:

- racist language or behaviour;
- xenophobia;
- stereotyping;
- prejudice;
- homophobic or biphobic language or behaviour;
- transphobic or gender-based prejudice;
- ableism and discrimination against disabled people;
- religious or belief-based prejudice;
- discriminatory comments about family structures;
- discriminatory comments relating to poverty or socioeconomic circumstances; and
- any other behaviour that undermines a child's or adult's dignity or sense of belonging.

Current safeguarding guidance places increased emphasis on leaders creating inclusive, anti-discriminatory cultures and practitioners challenging racism and discrimination. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

Responding to discriminatory behaviour

We will not ignore discriminatory behaviour because it is described as a joke, misunderstanding or expression of personal opinion.

Where discriminatory behaviour occurs:

1. The behaviour will be challenged promptly and appropriately.
2. The person affected will be supported.
3. Children will be helped to understand why discriminatory language or behaviour is unacceptable.
4. Staff will consider the age, developmental stage and individual needs of children involved.
5. Significant incidents will be recorded factually.
6. Parents/carers will be informed where appropriate.
7. Repeated or serious incidents will be discussed with the manager and addressed through the relevant behaviour, safeguarding or complaints procedures.
8. Where an incident raises a safeguarding concern, the nursery's safeguarding procedures will be followed.
9. Where discriminatory behaviour by an adult presents an ongoing risk, appropriate action will be taken to protect children and staff.

Discriminatory behaviour by adults

Discriminatory, threatening, abusive or offensive behaviour by parents, carers, visitors, contractors or other adults will not be tolerated.

Examples include:

- racist or xenophobic comments;
- discriminatory comments about a child's disability;
- homophobic or transphobic abuse;
- religious or belief-based abuse;
- discriminatory comments about family structure;
- harassment or intimidation;
- displaying discriminatory or threatening materials; and
- threatening or abusive behaviour towards staff or other families.

The manager will address such behaviour appropriately and may ask the individual to leave the premises.

Where necessary, the nursery may restrict an individual's access to the setting in accordance with its safeguarding, complaints and visitor procedures.

Serious threats, violence or suspected criminal behaviour may be reported to the police.

Employment

Impact Montessori Nursery is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment and employment practices.

- Vacancies will be advertised using fair and transparent criteria.
- Applicants will be assessed against the requirements of the role.
- Recruitment decisions will not unlawfully discriminate against applicants because of a protected characteristic.
- Appropriate safer recruitment and suitability checks will be completed.
- Job descriptions and person specifications will reflect the nursery's commitment to equality, inclusion and respect.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered during recruitment and employment where required.
- Staff will be supported to develop their knowledge and skills in equality, inclusion, anti-discriminatory practice and safeguarding.

- Concerns about discriminatory treatment within employment will be dealt with through the appropriate management or grievance procedures.

Any occupational requirement or other lawful exception relied upon in recruitment will only be used where legally permitted and objectively appropriate.

Training and staff development

All staff are expected to understand their responsibilities for promoting equality and inclusion.

Training and professional development will include, as appropriate:

- equality and diversity;
- anti-racism and anti-discriminatory practice;
- safeguarding;
- SEND and inclusive practice;
- supporting children with EAL;
- cultural awareness;
- recognising unconscious bias;
- challenging stereotypes and prejudice;
- supporting children's emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging; and
- recognising and responding to discriminatory incidents.

Staff will be encouraged to reflect on their practice and identify ways to improve inclusion.

Curriculum and learning environment

Our curriculum will help children to develop:

- positive self-esteem;
- confidence;
- empathy;
- respect for others;
- curiosity about the wider world;
- an understanding that people may be different from one another;
- positive attitudes towards diversity; and
- the ability to recognise and challenge unkind or discriminatory behaviour in age-appropriate ways.

We will:

- create an environment of mutual respect and tolerance;
- model respectful and inclusive behaviour;
- challenge stereotypes and prejudice;
- provide books, toys, displays, music, images and other resources that reflect a wide range of people and communities;
- avoid stereotypical, tokenistic or derogatory representations;
- include a broad range of family structures;
- reflect different cultures, ethnicities, abilities, religions and beliefs;
- support children who speak English as an additional language;

- value children's home languages;
- provide appropriate support for disabled children and children with SEND;
- ensure activities are adapted where necessary to enable participation; and
- provide opportunities for children to learn about similarities and differences in positive and developmentally appropriate ways.

Celebrations of festivals, holy days and cultural events will be handled sensitively and should not become tokenistic representations of particular cultures or religions.

Children will not be expected to participate in religious or cultural activities in a way that conflicts with their family's sincerely held beliefs, subject to the nursery's legal and educational responsibilities.

Supporting children learning English as an additional language

We recognise that learning more than one language is an asset and that a child's home language is an important part of their identity.

We will:

- value and encourage children's home languages;
- work with parents/carers to understand the languages children use at home;
- use visual resources, gestures, repetition and other communication strategies;
- provide opportunities for children to hear and use familiar languages;
- avoid assuming that limited English indicates limited understanding or ability;
- monitor children's communication and language development appropriately; and
- seek specialist advice where there are concerns about a child's development.

Supporting children with SEND

We are committed to inclusive practice for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We will:

- identify barriers to participation;
- work in partnership with parents/carers;
- use the graduated approach where appropriate;
- implement agreed support plans and reasonable adjustments;
- adapt activities, routines and resources;
- work with the setting's SENCO and relevant professionals;
- ensure children can participate in the curriculum and wider life of the nursery; and
- monitor the effectiveness of adjustments and make changes where necessary.

Valuing diversity in families

We welcome and respect the diversity of children's families.

We recognise families may include:

- parents who live together or separately;

- single parents;
- same-sex parents;
- adoptive parents;
- foster carers;
- kinship carers;
- grandparents;
- step-parents;
- extended family members; and
- other adults who have a significant caring role.

We will avoid assumptions about children's family circumstances and use inclusive language when speaking with children and families.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to contribute to nursery life where appropriate.

Communication with families

We will seek to ensure that all families can access information about the nursery.

Where reasonably practicable, we will:

- communicate in clear language;
- provide information in alternative formats where needed;
- use appropriate interpretation or translation support where available;
- consider accessibility requirements;
- provide information through more than one communication method where appropriate; and
- listen to and respond respectfully to families' views.

We will not assume that all families have the same communication needs, working patterns, cultural expectations or access to technology.

Food and dietary requirements

We will work in partnership with parents/carers to meet children's dietary requirements arising from:

- allergies and medical needs;
- religious or cultural beliefs;
- ethical or family choices; and
- other individual circumstances.

All dietary requirements will be managed in accordance with the nursery's food hygiene, allergy and medication procedures.

Children will be encouraged to respect differences in food and mealtime practices.

Meetings and participation

We will seek to ensure that all families have a fair opportunity to participate in the life of the nursery.

Where possible:

- meetings will be arranged at accessible times;
- information will be communicated clearly and in advance;
- alternative communication methods will be considered;
- parents and carers will be encouraged to contribute to their child's learning and development; and
- reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

We recognise that children's parents may not live together and will follow appropriate safeguarding, legal and information-sharing arrangements when communicating with parents and carers.

Supporting disadvantaged families

We recognise that financial hardship and social disadvantage can create barriers to participation and wellbeing.

Where appropriate, we will:

- signpost families towards relevant sources of support;
- consider reasonable flexibility within our procedures;
- work sensitively with families experiencing financial difficulties;
- avoid stigmatising children or families because of their circumstances; and
- work with relevant professionals where additional support is required.

Any financial arrangements remain subject to the nursery's fees and funding policies.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Where applicable to the nursery's legal status and functions, we will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

The duty requires relevant public authorities, and persons exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

The legal application of the Public Sector Equality Duty depends on the organisation's status and functions. ([Legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk))

Monitoring and reviewing

Impact Montessori Nursery will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- feedback from children and families;
- staff feedback and supervision;
- review of complaints and incidents;
- monitoring of participation and access;
- review of SEND support and reasonable adjustments;

- review of recruitment and employment practices;
- monitoring of discriminatory incidents;
- regular review of resources and the learning environment; and
- annual policy review.

Where monitoring identifies inequality, disadvantage or discriminatory practice, the nursery will take reasonable and proportionate action to address it.

Complaints

Parents and carers who believe that they or their child has experienced discrimination or unfair treatment should raise their concern through the nursery's complaints procedure.

Complaints will be handled fairly, sensitively and confidentially.

No child, parent, carer or staff member will be victimised for raising a genuine concern or complaint.

Safeguarding

Equality and inclusion are integral to safeguarding.

Staff will remain alert to the possibility that discrimination, racism, prejudice, bullying, exclusion or identity-based abuse may affect a child's wellbeing or indicate a wider safeguarding concern.

Where a concern about a child's safety or welfare arises, staff must follow the nursery's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

The 2026 *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidance strengthens expectations for anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice and makes clear that safeguarding applies to all children, including children living in different family and care arrangements. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115222/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2026.pdf))

Legal framework

- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Children Act 1989**
- **Children Act 2004**
- **Children and Families Act 2014**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years**
- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, current version**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, where applicable**

The current EYFS framework for group and school-based providers came into force on **1 September 2026**. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115222/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2026.pdf))

Further guidance

- Department for Education – **Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers**
- Department for Education – **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**
- Department for Education – **SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years**
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – **Equality Act 2010 guidance**
- Department for Education – **Help for Early Years Providers**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, the needs of children and families, or the nursery's practice.

This policy was adopted by: Impact Montessori Nursery

On: _____

Date to be reviewed: _____

Signed on behalf of the provider: _____

Name of signatory: _____

Role of signatory: _____