

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (11)

Including provision for pupils with particular religious, dietary,
language or cultural needs



High Close School

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of Barnardo's Basis and Values is to **"respect the unique worth of every person"** and this underpins all aspects of our work with young people. This policy should be read in conjunction with Barnardo's policies on [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#). High Close works hard to recognise each young person's individual needs and works within the legislation and guidelines set out in [The Equality Act 2010](#)

All staff are required to undertake training and e-learning in Equality and Diversity and it is a rolling agenda item for supervision of staff to ensure that its importance is maintained. Equality is considered and underpins the decision making of all aspects of the school and as such is intrinsic to the way we work with young people and our values as a school and employer.

It is important that every member of staff is aware of their own beliefs, opinions, values and the personal assumptions they make in their work. Members of staff have the right and a duty to appropriately challenge their colleagues and young people if they make discriminatory comments or if they act in a disrespectful manner towards anyone. It is important to address individual understanding in a sensitive manner with the aim of improving the individual's level of awareness.

This policy is drawn up in consideration of the Equality Act 2010 which protects individuals from discrimination and harassment based upon 'protected characteristics', the protected characteristics in respect of the pupils are:

- age
- being or becoming a transsexual person
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Equality of opportunity applies to all members of the school community; pupils, staff, governors, parents and carers and community members.

When thinking about equality and diversity, we need to consider mental health and wellbeing. Mental health is something that we all have, and mental health problems are something we can all experience, whatever our background and walk of life. The risks of developing mental ill-health, however, are not equally distributed, with some groups of people being more likely to develop mental health problems than others.

People living in financial hardship, for example, are at increased risk of developing mental health problems and lower mental wellbeing. Similarly, people from minority groups who are exposed to discrimination and social exclusion based on race, gender and sexual orientation are also at greater risk. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to live well and experience good mental health and we have a responsibility in our community to work together to support each other in respectful, inclusive and culturally appropriate ways, valuing our rights and enabling us all to feel appreciated for who we are, in all our diversity.

2. SAFEGUARDING AND EQUALITY

Equality ensures that individuals are not unfairly discriminated against but it should not be used as an acceptable explanation for child abuse or neglect and is not acceptable grounds for inaction when there are concerns that a child is or may be suffering or likely to suffer harm. Professionals should be aware of, and work with, the strengths and support systems available within families, ethnic groups and communities, which can be built on to help safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Staff should refer to the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy for further information around safeguarding. This policy is informed by and should be read in conjunction with 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

3. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RACE AND CULTURAL / LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Staff must ensure that they are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups to ensure that the particular care needs of young people from these groups are met. Staff should also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against minority ethnic people.

All children, whatever their race or cultural background, must receive the same care and safeguards with regard to abuse and neglect.

Staff members should however, be aware that not all cultural needs, beliefs and values are visible or easily recognisable. Good childcare with any child or young person means striving to get to know them as individuals. In line with the school's philosophy, all staff and young people should be encouraged to understand and embrace diversity; this includes cultural and religious expression.

It should be remembered that young people from any ethnic group can experience racism in their life and this in itself needs to be understood from their own perspective.

Geographical Area

High Close School is situated in Wokingham, Berkshire and the population is predominantly white. This needs to be taken into consideration when young people are within the community with staff members or unsupervised. Young people may feel isolated due to this and staff should ensure they are aware of this and ensure they support young people appropriately.

Language

Staff should be aware that where English is not the first language for a young person and their families, they may require additional support.

Young people may also have regional accents and/or be used to certain regional dialects which can make it hard for them to understand other dialects/accents.

In both cases staff should ensure that the young people receive support and young people should not be discriminated against because of their linguistic background. Care should be taken not to infer that one dialect or accent is superior/inferior to others. Staff should make appropriate allowances to support young people in making themselves understood and understanding those around them.

All staff and young people should be aware, or made aware, that any language used either consciously or unconsciously may be offensive to others.

Stereotyping

It is important that staff members do not presume that all young people from minority ethnic groups are the same; there are differences within those groupings. Staff should ensure they work to understand these differences.

Basic Care

Young people from minority ethnic groups may have individual needs; this may include needing special, additional hair or skin care which can be facilitated by the school.

Cultural Beliefs

Staff should be aware that some cultures may have beliefs that discriminate against others and staff should be aware of this and be prepared to discuss this with young people and possibly their parents and carers. Young people should be made aware that whilst they are entitled to their cultural beliefs and backgrounds it will not be acceptable to use these beliefs to bully or discriminate against others.

4. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

All pupils will be encouraged to follow the religion of their choice and their parents/carers will also be consulted about this at the young person's admissions meeting or before. It is important for staff to take into account both the young person's and parent's wishes with regards to religious observances as there may be differences in what the young person would like to observe and what their parents/carers wish them to do. Staff should try to ensure that both sides meet an agreement regarding this and ensure it is recorded as part of the child's placement plan.

Staff should ensure they make themselves aware of any important religious dates for young people and make sure they are given the opportunity to observe the events. This may involve adapting the timetable for the young person or parents/carers may wish to request leave for young people to attend local religious ceremonies/events.

Diet

There may be certain foods that young people are not allowed to eat. If there are certain foods that they require, these should be identified and purchased for them throughout their time at the school. This issue should be raised as early as possible with the pupil's parents/carers to identify individual differences and needs. Separate food preparation equipment may need to be obtained in order to meet dietary requirements i.e. knives, chopping boards etc.

Dress

Recognition should be given to a young person's religious and cultural needs in relation to their dress and allowances will be made if necessary.

Stereotyping

There are various stereotypes and prejudices associated with different religious beliefs and staff should ensure that they are not influenced by these. Staff should ensure they work with young people to see past stereotype and prejudice as well.

Gender Awareness

Young people from certain religious beliefs may not be able to spend time alone with other young people or staff of the opposite gender and this should be discussed early on in the young person's placement and adequate provision made regarding this in the staffing arrangements within the unit and school.

Young people may also not be able to take part in certain activities with young people/staff of the opposite gender i.e. swimming and again this should be discussed with parents/carers at the beginning of a placement and alternative arrangements agreed upon.

Young people should not miss out on opportunities because of these arrangements and every effort will be made to support this however there may be certain situations where alternative arrangements are not possible i.e. in the case of staff absence and this should be discussed with parents/carers and the young person if it should arise.

5. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GENDER

All young people should be treated equally regardless of gender. Young people should be offered the same opportunities and activities and these should not be stereotyped to gender e.g. football for boys and dancing for girls.

Staffing and gender

Staff must have an understanding and awareness of the individual child's/young person's social history and to be aware of risk issues in relation to gender. This information is to be reflected in the Individual Risk Assessment and Behaviour Support Plan.

When children and young people visit a GP or attend a hospital, if at all possible they should be given some choice as to which staff accompany them and of the gender of the GP/medical practitioner they wish to see.

If it becomes necessary to physically intervene with a young person, consideration must be given to the gender balance of the staff managing this wherever possible and practical.

Education

Young people will be encouraged to access all opportunities offered in education. Young people will be able to access all extra-curricular activities and these will not be closed to young people on the basis of gender.

Young people will also be able to access information and education in appropriate settings for example young people may feel uncomfortable discussing certain parts of the sex education curriculum with young people of the opposite sex so this should be accounted for in planning these lessons.

Facilities

Young people have access to individual toilet and washing facilities in the units. In the residential units every young person is allocated separate sleeping accommodation.

In school there are both grouped gender specific toilet facilities and individual gender free facilities.

Uniform

All uniform is gender free and all young people are free to wear any item from the uniform list they choose.

6. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: PREGNANCY/ MATERNITY

Young people should not be discriminated against because of being pregnant or having a partner who is pregnant. Allowances should be made for young people who are pregnant or who have recently given birth in order to enable them to access as much of their education as possible. A risk assessment will be completed for each young person ensuring their wellbeing and safety.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED

High Close School is a residential and day special school. All young people who attend High Close School have an Education, Health and Care Plan however the different needs of young people vary enormously. Young people may have a specific diagnosis or may have a variety of complex needs that prevent them from accessing mainstream schooling. All young people are treated individually and therefore we ensure that their individual special educational needs are met within what we provide as a school and are addressed within their Individual Education Plans and Individual Risk Assessments and Positive Handling Plans.

Young people should not be discriminated against because of their special educational needs and all young people will be offered the same opportunities and choices in their education. Young people should not be discriminated against because of their academic or sporting ability either and again will be offered all the same opportunities and choices in both their education and in extra-curricular activities. Lessons are differentiated for young people according to their ability in order to ensure that their needs are met and that the young person feels they are able

to achieve. It is important that realistic targets are set for young people so they are not set up to fail and instead can feel a sense of accomplishment. Young people who come to High Close have often felt they have 'failed' in previous educational establishments and therefore may need more encouragement to enable them to achieve academically.

Young people's needs are assessed initially during an assessment period where it will be decided whether High Close as a school can meet these needs appropriately and then will be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure we are still meeting the young person's needs. Young people's needs may not be able to be met by High Close in which case a permanent place would not be offered after their probationary period. In addition to this a young person's needs may change over the course of their time at school and High Close may not be able to meet their additional needs. Young people will not be discriminated against because of this rather it may become necessary to identify a more appropriate service to meet their Special Educational Needs.

8. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: DISABILITY

Young people at High Close are treated as individuals and as such should not be discriminated against if they have a disability. Young people should all be treated equally regardless of their ability. High Close looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life chances for people with disabilities, including specific support or assistive technology solutions.

All young people will be offered the same opportunities and choices in their education with school and in the units.. Staff will ensure that any necessary reasonable adjustments are made to ensure young people with disabilities who attend High Close School can access all the opportunities that are on offer. Consideration should be taken in the admission process regarding the ability to meet a young person's needs in line with High Close's admission criteria.

High Close's buildings – the school provisions and residential units have been subject to the Building Surveyors Accessibility Report and amendments have been made to ensure disabled visitors i.e. parents/carers, professionals etc are able to access all areas necessary. The residential units and parts of the school buildings are not suitable for young people with severe physical mobility issues due to the layout (eg stairs). Staff will ensure necessary and reasonable adjustments are made for young people who have suffered an injury where they may be temporarily unable to use stairs etc so they can continue to access their education. Please see Care of Boarders who are unwell/Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions policy for further information regarding this.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Young people should all be treated equally regardless of sexual orientation. Homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic behaviours are not acceptable and will be addressed within High Close's disciplinary procedures. (Please see High Close policies Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships, Countering Bullying and Barnardo's Staff Disciplinary and Resolution policies). Although staff put in place appropriate boundaries and guidelines young people may experience bullying and this should be dealt with in line with the schools Countering Bullying policy.

Education

Young people will be provided with education about sexuality through PSHE lessons, and PSHME work in key working, as well as group work activities and general conversation. For further information on this please see Relationships and Sex Education Policy.

Support

If young people are questioning or have questions about their sexuality staff should ensure that the young person can discuss this with someone they feel comfortable with, either a member of the staff team at High Close or provide them with opportunities to access external organisations/professionals. A list of these and their contact details can be found in the policy Pupils Access to Persons Independent of High Close Staff Group.

Young people may question or be unsure about their sexuality and staff should ensure this is not minimised or ignored, rather they should make sure the young person has all the information they need and be available should they want to discuss it.

The school offers an LGBTQ+ Group for any young person to access for support and information. The young people can access this confidentially we will not inform staff and parent/carers if the young person do not want the information shared, unless there are any issue with safeguarding. School also has LGBTQ+ Allies both staff and young people. This support is available to all young people, and parents if requested.

Stereotyping

There are various stereotypes and prejudices associated with different sexualities and staff should ensure they are not influenced by these and their practice is the same with all young people. Staff should ensure they work with young people to help them see past stereotype and prejudice as well.

10. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity describes what gender a person identifies as being, not necessarily the gender to which they were born.

Young people may question or doubt about their gender identity. They may have questioned this since they were young, however, adolescence and puberty can increase the feelings of confusion, due to the physical and emotional changes that occur during this time. Whilst some young people may understand these issues on their own, many will need support or guidance regarding this. Staff should ensure that young people can access resources to support them in this and that they are not discriminated against.

Young people are free to choose the name they are called by and the pronoun by which they are known. This cannot be short term and must be a determined change, onsite this can a request that does not need parental permission, but the school prefers that parents/carers are informed

and will work with the young person to encourage communication and discussion. Exams, attendance and official documentation are the only situations where the legal name must be used.

11. EQUALITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: DIETARY NEEDS

Young people who attend High Close may have various different dietary needs. Needs regarding race, cultural background and/or religious belief are discussed above in the relevant sections. Young people may also have different dietary needs due to medical conditions and/or allergies.

Staff should ensure they are aware of these needs before or at the young person's admission meeting and that this information is shared with other staff as appropriate including the domestic staff. This information should be recorded as part of the young person's placement plan and any medical intervention that may be necessary in case of the young person ingesting something they are allergic to should be shared and staff should receive training if necessary. Young people should not 'miss out' as result of their dietary needs and alternative appropriate provision should be made for them to ensure this.

Young people may also struggle with mealtimes because of sensory needs or because of past issues they have experienced. This should be documented and recorded within their Placement Plans/BSP/IHP where appropriate and appropriate measures put in place to support young people.

12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER HERITAGE

The section on equality and diversity: Race/Cultural/Linguistic background also applies to young people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage however there are specific issues pertaining to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people.

Staff should be aware that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people may have had significant breaks in their previous education due to moving around or being unable to access appropriate education where they were living. Staff should ensure that they differentiate appropriately but also make sure they are aware that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people may be more anxious about being in a formal education setting and take steps to reduce this anxiety.

Gender awareness

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities adhere to traditional values regarding males and females and girls are usually not allowed to spend time by themselves with boys outside of their immediate family until they are married. Staff should be aware of this particularly when young people are looking to go out on trips independently and should involve parents and carers in planning this.

13. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS

Children of asylum seekers are entitled to and required to receive full time education and this is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority to organise. Any young person who is referred to High Close as the child of an asylum seeker is entitled to the same experience as any other child and should not be discriminated against because of this. Children of asylum seekers may need time off to attend appointments/interviews etc pertaining to the asylum application and appropriate arrangements should be made to facilitate this. If the young person themselves are seeking asylum then they will be supported by either social care and/or family members and may need additional time to attend meetings relating to their asylum application.

Children and young people who have been granted refugee status have not necessarily been given permanent residency and relevant staff should ensure they are aware of the young person's status. Most people granted refugee status are given leave to remain for five years and they will have to apply for permanent residency if they wish to stay in the UK permanently however people who are considered to have special needs may be granted longer leave to remain in order to complete their application and to receive the appropriate support. No young person should be discriminated against because of their refugee or residency status and are entitled to the same experience as any other child including the right to full time education.

Young people who have been granted refugee status may have to undertake further applications if they wish to gain permanent residency and reasonable adjustments and support should be provided for them. Depending on their age and whether they are applying for residency with their parents or not young people may have to undertake Life in the UK tests and English language tests in order to apply for residency.

Young people who have entered the UK as an asylum seeker or refugee may have had difficult and upsetting experiences in their home countries and may require additional support and/or counselling to help them cope with difficulties that arise from this. Staff should also be aware of the guidance above regarding working with young people from different race/cultural/linguistic backgrounds and also possibly religious beliefs when working with young people who are asylum seekers/refugees.

Young people who are seeking asylum or have been granted refugee status may not be able to stay in the UK permanently and may be required to return to their home countries. This can be extremely upsetting as families may not want to leave the UK for various reasons and staff should be aware that this may affect young people and work to support them accordingly.

More information on asylum and refugee status can be found on the UK Home Office website [UK Visas and Immigration](#).

14. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: CHILDREN WITH PARENTS IN ARMED FORCES

Children who have a parent in the armed forces may experience different difficulties to other young people because of the expectations regarding armed forces personnel. The Department of Education and Ofsted have highlighted that young people who have parents in the armed forces are at risk of lower achievement due to the various difficulties they may encounter and staff should ensure they are aware of any possible issues and work to ensure that the young person is not disadvantaged as a result. Staff and young people may have views on the armed forces and various conflicts they are involved in however staff should ensure that their personal views do not affect their interaction with young people.

Young people may have had a disrupted previous education because they have had to move around quite a lot depending on their parent's postings. If the young person already has difficulties with education then moving around a lot can exacerbate this. Some young people may become anxious about new settings due to the moving around and can become introverted as a result, conversely it may mean the young person is extremely adaptable and can cope with new situations well so staff need to be aware of the young person's background when assessing and working with them. Young people with specific additional needs such as dyslexia, ADHD etc may have had difficulty in gaining diagnosis due to the short periods they have spent in previous schools and staff should be aware of this as well when initially assessing young people.

Staff should ensure they make themselves aware of the parents postings/tours as if a parent is away from the family it may affect the young person's behaviour and mood. Staff should take this into account and ensure it is recorded in the young person's placement plan so other staff can be aware of this. Young people may feel they have to take on the responsibility of the absent parent in the home which may put extra pressure on them which they might not be able to cope with. The young person may also become upset or anxious about their parents wellbeing particularly if they are on tour in an area of conflict and so staff should take this into consideration when managing their behaviour and offer them appropriate support through key working, counselling etc.

Staff can also access [Directorate Children and Young People](#) (SCE) website for advice and support on how to work with young people who parents are in the armed forces.

Young people whose parent/s are in the armed forces are also protected by the Armed Forces Covenant which states that 'the armed forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services'. This covenant is recognised in law under the Armed Forces Act 2011. Funding is available for a pupil premium to support young people in education. Young people from armed forces families may also be eligible for the [Residential Support Scheme](#) when moving on from High Close to college to enable them to receive financial support if their course is not in the local area of where their parent/s are posted.

15. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: CHILDREN OF PRISONERS

All young people who attend High Close should be treated equally and young people should not be discriminated against because of the actions of their parents. Recent Barnardo's campaigns

have highlighted the risk of poorer outcomes for children with a parent who is in prison/has been in prison and further information can be found on this here - <https://www.nicco.org.uk/>

Staff should be aware that having a parent in prison can cause anxiety and upset for young people and should ensure that this is taken into consideration in the young person's Individual Risk Assessment and Behaviour Support Plan. Changes to a parent's sentence or the possibility of a parent coming out of prison can also cause anxiety for a young person and their family. It may be that the parent was in prison because of violence towards other family members and their release may make the young person anxious about the violence reoccurring. In other cases the young person may be anxious about how the family dynamic will change with a parent coming back home and this may cause them to behave differently. Staff should liaise with parents/carers and other professionals to ensure that they are aware of issues surrounding the parent in prison so they can make relevant staff members aware and plan appropriately for the young person so it does not adversely affect them too much.

Staff should also be aware that young people may share the reason their parent is in prison with their peers who may react badly depending on the conviction which may then lead to bullying or harassment. Bullying is not acceptable and should be dealt with through the Countering Bullying Policy. For more serious incidents the school's discipline procedures should be followed (please see Discipline (including sanctions, rewards and restraints) policy and Staff Disciplinary, Grievance and Whistleblowing policy).

16. RADICALISATION

Young people may be at risk of Radicalisation due to their backgrounds, this may be because of the community they live in, their religious beliefs or their cultural background. Equally young people may be radicalised by people they meet online or when out with peers.

It is important for staff to recognise that just because a young person may have different beliefs this does not necessarily mean they are/have been radicalised. Staff should explore any potential extremist views with young people and explore how they came to have these views. If staff are concerned that young people are potentially at risk of radicalisation or are being radicalised then they must make a report to the DSL's who will assess whether this needs to be referred under the Prevent duty.

17. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Governors and SLT will monitor

This policy will be reviewed every year by SLT. At every review, the policy will be shared with the relevant governing subcommittee or Chair of Governors.

The Deputy Principal will ensure the policy is followed in the education environment in the school and is part of the education of the young people where appropriate.

The Leader for Care will ensure the policy is followed in the residential settings.

