Ashbridge
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL & NURSERIES

DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY
for employees and children

Approved by: SLT

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Accessibility: Available on the website and as a paper copy on request

Scope: Ashbridge Independent School and Nursery, Ashbridge-on-Ribble Nursery, Ashbridge Nursery at Maxy Farm, The Fledglings Nursery

Introduction

At Ashbridge, we are committed to providing a fully inclusive environment that meets the diverse needs of all children, families, and staff members. We actively promote anti-discriminatory practice and strive to ensure equality, accessibility, and respect across all areas of our provision.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our **Safer Recruitment Policy** (for staff) and our **Admissions Policies** (for children and families).

Our approach is informed by current legislation and national guidance, including:

- **The Equality Act 2010**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)**
- **Independent School Standards**
- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**
- **ACAS Guidance on Equality and Diversity**

Our Aims:

- To provide a **safe, inclusive, and accessible environment** where all children and staff can thrive.
- To actively promote **equality of opportunity** and eliminate all forms of discrimination and stereotyping.
- To embed **inclusive practice** across all areas of our work, making it a consistent and visible part of daily life.
- To **recognise, celebrate, and value diversity**, including the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of families, staff, and visitors.
- To present and promote **positive representations** of gender, ethnicity, disability, and individual differences through our resources, curriculum, and communications.

We are also committed to improving access for individuals with learning disabilities, impairments, or medical conditions that require reasonable adjustments. Our **Accessibility Plan** outlines the specific actions we are taking to enhance access to the physical environment, curriculum, and information. This plan includes clear timeframes and is reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team to ensure meaningful and measurable progress.

Staff, Volunteers, and Students

At Ashbridge, we are committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and students are treated fairly and equitably, in line with our core values of inclusion and anti-discrimination.

We do not discriminate against individuals applying for roles, requesting changes to working hours, or seeking promotion on the grounds of **age, disability, gender identity or reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation**.

In line with the **Safer Recruitment Policy** and **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)**, all staff must be physically and mentally capable of performing their role. However, we are committed to making reasonable adjustments to

support staff or applicants with disabilities or specific circumstances, wherever possible, to help them perform effectively in their roles.

While we acknowledge the broad definition of disability, some conditions and behaviours are not classified as impairments under the **Equality Act 2010**. These are outlined in **Appendix 1**, and individuals with these conditions are not protected under this Act or the provisions of this policy.

Recruitment

We are committed to inclusive and non-discriminatory recruitment practices:

- All vacancies are advertised, and candidates are assessed against transparent and objective criteria.
- Applications are welcomed from individuals of all backgrounds.
- Every job description includes a clear statement of our commitment to promoting equality and valuing diversity.
- We regularly review our recruitment procedures to ensure they remain fair, accessible, and inclusive.
- Applicants are invited to indicate any access requirements or reasonable adjustments they may need as part of the recruitment process.

Employment and Reasonable Adjustments

We make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to enable employees with disabilities to fulfil the essential functions of their role.

- Any adjustments must ensure both **the safety of children** and **the effective delivery of care and education**.
- While adjustments will be thoughtfully considered and made where reasonable, they must not compromise the safety or wellbeing of the children in our care.
- Requests for flexible working or changes to working hours will be carefully considered but may be declined where there is a valid business reason, as set out in our **Flexible Working Policy**.

Team Training and Development

- We seek out training opportunities for staff and volunteers to enable them to develop anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices, which enable all children to flourish.
- We regularly monitor and review our practices to ensure that we are fully implementing our policy for promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusion.

Children, including current and prospective pupils

Ashbridge is committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all children and their families. We ensure that no child or family is discriminated against on the grounds of **disability, gender identity or reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic**.

We take reasonable steps to support children with disabilities or additional needs so they can participate fully in the life of the school or nursery. This includes making reasonable adjustments to our environment, provision, or policies where appropriate.

However, as outlined in our **Admissions Policies**, there may be instances where, even with reasonable adjustments in place, we are not able to adequately meet a child's needs. In such cases, we may be unable to offer a place. Additionally, if a child is already attending and we find—despite reasonable adjustments—that we can no longer meet their needs, we may have to withdraw the place. These decisions are made carefully, with the child's best interests and safety as the foremost consideration.

Admissions & Communication

We welcome applications for places in our school and nurseries from all members of the community. Our **Admissions Policies** reflect our commitment to inclusion and equality.

- We do not discriminate against a child or their family on the basis of disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or social and economic background.
- We communicate clearly and accessibly with families, both in written and spoken formats, and aim to provide information in a person's home language where possible.
- All parents are signposted to our key policies via our website and Parent Handbook.
- Where a child has a special educational need or disability, we assess whether we can meet their needs and, where appropriate, create an individual plan with reasonable adjustments to enable them to participate fully in nursery or school life.
- We actively challenge any discriminatory behaviour or attitudes from staff, parents, or others in our community.
- Our Complaints Procedure is accessible, impartial, and clearly communicated to families. It is designed to ensure concerns are heard and addressed fairly and promptly.

Curriculum and Practices

At Ashbridge, our curriculum is designed to foster positive self-identity, respect for others, and a strong sense of belonging for all children. Across all areas of learning and every scheme of work, we actively promote **equality of opportunity** and ensure that both **equality** and **equity** are embedded in our daily practice.

We are committed to offering the same opportunities to all children, regardless of gender or background, and take additional steps where needed to ensure every individual and group can thrive. This includes tailoring opportunities to meet specific needs, enabling each child to realise their full potential and feel empowered to succeed.

Our environment is thoughtfully designed to be as **inclusive and accessible** as possible for children, families, and visitors. We routinely make **reasonable adjustments** to support individuals with disabilities or other conditions requiring additional consideration, ensuring that all members of our community feel welcome and supported.

Promoting Diversity and Equality

We actively develop children's understanding and appreciation of diversity and equality through the following approaches:

- Valuing every child and building their self-esteem and confidence.
- Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and inclusion.
- Choosing resources that reflect a wide range of backgrounds, cultures, and communities.
- Promoting positive representation in books, images, displays, and materials.
- Celebrating diverse cultural festivals and events throughout the year.
- Challenging discriminatory behaviour or language and promoting understanding of fairness and respect.
- Exploring global food cultures and mealtime practices, encouraging respectful dialogue around differences.
- Embracing and celebrating the diversity of modern family structures and lifestyles.
- Encouraging children to share their lived experiences and family stories.
- Ensuring each setting has a dedicated **Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO)** to lead on inclusive practice.

Inclusive Curriculum Practices

To ensure the curriculum is accessible and meaningful for every child, we:

- Provide **equal access to learning** opportunities, by differentiating the curriculum to meet children's special educational needs.
- 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 individuals.
- Include children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in all learning opportunities, wherever reasonably possible.
- Support children with **English as an Additional Language (EAL)** by prioritising communication and language development and providing targeted interventions as needed.
- Promote and maintain children's home languages by involving family members and, where possible, providing access to adults who speak the child's home language—especially during key transition periods.

APPENDIX 1

The following are not considered to be disabilities:

- hayfever (unless aggravating other relevant conditions)
- a tendency to set fire
- a tendency to steal
- a tendency to partake in physical or sexual abuse of others
- exhibitionism
- voyeurism

Other areas not covered by the Equality Act:

- tattoos
- piercings
- addictions to alcohol, nicotine and other substances