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Inclusion Policy

Effective from: 1 November 2025
Next Review Due: 1 November 2026

Policy Statement

At St Mark's Preschool, we understand that every child and every family is unique and deserves to be valued, respected, and supported to achieve the highest possible outcomes. Inclusion is embedded at the heart of everything we do.

Our strong relationships — between staff, children, families, and the wider community — underpin our commitment to meeting each child's individual needs here at St Mark's Preschool.

"The EYFS seeks to provide quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress, and no child gets left behind." *(EYFS, 2025 – Principles)*

We aim not only to include but to enable excellence for all children and families, whatever their background, needs, or starting point.

Who is this policy aimed at?

This policy applies to all children and families within our community — including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), children known to social care, children with English as an additional language and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It covers all aspects of our practice — admissions, curriculum, teaching and learning, safeguarding, partnerships with families and other professionals, and the monitoring of outcomes.

Our vision

St Mark's Preschool operates within the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2025) and aligns with the Ofsted Early Years Inspection Toolkit.

We strive for "exceptional" practice as defined by Ofsted — where inclusive approaches are fully embedded, sustained, and demonstrably impactful for children facing barriers to learning.

"Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured." *(EYFS, 2025 – Unique Child)*

We believe that the best outcomes for children are achieved when their individual needs, interests, abilities, and home lives are understood and responded to.

We are committed to:

- High expectations for all children, recognising that inclusion means achievement, engagement, and belonging. We encourage children, with the right support, to push through barriers and achieve their full potential.
- Creating a community in which children and families feel they belong, are valued, and are supported to succeed, whatever their starting point.
- Building positive relationships through our key-person approach, where every child is known well and every family's voice is heard.
- Celebrating diversity as a strength — understanding that differences of culture, language, ability, and background enrich our Preschool community.

"Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships." *(EYFS, 2025 – Positive Relationships)*

Identification and Early Intervention

We know that early identification of needs and timely intervention are key to ensuring that all children thrive.

Our onsite SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) leads the process of early identification, assessment, and support, in collaboration with practitioners. We monitor each child's progress from their starting points and act swiftly if concerns arise.

We work collaboratively with families, key persons, and, where appropriate, outside agencies to implement support plans, ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made and that every child has equal access to the curriculum.

Key persons meet regularly with their Room Leaders and the Manager to discuss the strengths and challenges of their individual key children, and next steps are formed collaboratively to ensure our provision is meeting their needs.

Next steps are tracked and analysed across each term for every child in our setting, to ensure progress is made and outcomes are high, particularly in the Prime areas of the EYFS (Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Communication and Language).

Reducing Barriers & Promoting Participation

"Equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported." *(EYFS, 2025 – Overarching Principles)*

We ensure all children can fully access and participate in our provision by:

- Differentiating activities and environments to suit individual needs.
- Prioritising communication and language development for all children, which includes the consistent use of Widget visual aids across the entire teaching team, with some practitioners skilled in Makaton and many practitioners supporting EAL children by learning suitable phrases in their home language.
- Holding regular key-person meetings with families to discuss progress, needs, and aspirations.
- Conducting regular supervision sessions and reflective practice with practitioners at staff meetings to review inclusion.
- Monitoring children's achievement, engagement, and wellbeing.
- Ensuring effective transitions when settling into Preschool, between Preschool classrooms and into primary school.

Staffing, Leadership and Professional Development

We know that high-quality inclusive practice depends on skilled and reflective practitioners.

- Our SENCo provides leadership in inclusive practice, liaises with external agencies, and supports the team. Our SENCo attends our staff meetings and guides discussions around our vulnerable and disadvantaged children so that the whole team is aware of the challenges children may be facing and ways in which we can help them achieve their goals.
- All practitioners receive regular training in areas such as SEND, communication, supporting EAL and equality and diversity.
- Regular team meetings, held daily, and line manager supervision, held monthly, ensure we are embedding inclusive principles into every aspect of daily practice, with consistency and sensitivity.
- Staff reflect regularly on the impact of their work, ensuring continuous improvement and excellence in outcomes for all children. All members of the team are expected to contribute ideas, reflections, evaluations of our practice and observations of the children in order to continue to improve our provision and support our children effectively.
- The Senior Management team hold Learning Walks throughout the year to monitor inclusive practice in both our classrooms and ensure our ethos is consistently embedded in our teaching practice.
- We have three fully qualified Mental Health First Aiders onsite; one in each classroom and one in the office. They are fully trained and able to support our parents and carers who share with us when they are finding things difficult and need some support. Our Mental Health First Aiders are equipped to signpost our most vulnerable families as

soon as they reach out to us, ensuring that all families in our community feel safe and welcome in our setting.

Curriculum, Planning and Learning Environment

Our curriculum is designed around the principle that each child is a unique learner. We plan from children's individual interests and needs, providing challenge, support, and choice so that all can engage and make progress.

"Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests and development of each child in their care." *(EYFS, 2025 – Section 1: Learning and Development Requirements)*

Ensuring our curriculum is accessible to all learners begins at the family's first tour of Preschool, where they are welcome to share with us any concerns they have about their child settling or possible reservations about their development. The child's key person discusses their likes, dislikes, needs and behaviours with the parent or carer over the phone, using the Five to Thrive questioning process to compile a detailed picture of how we can best support them when they start. This is followed up with a Home Visit, during which our practitioners get to know the children in their home environment and consider ways in which we can adapt our provision at Preschool to ensure a smooth transition for the family.

For those families using St Mark's Preschool alongside another Early Years provider, key persons will conduct a shared care call with the other setting (with the family's consent) to ensure we are engaging in a consistent approach to support the child's needs.

We use assessment information from our daily observations and reflections to adapt planning, provision, and support. The environment — both indoors and outdoors — is inclusive, accessible, and inspiring for all.

Staff are trained in 'In The Moment planning', a concept which prioritises the children's personal needs and interests. Practitioners meet children where they are, and reflect on their individual strengths and challenges in order to inform future planning. Staff are not afraid to change the direction of their teaching in order to adapt to a child's personal circumstances, needs or area of interest.

Partnerships with Families and the Community

Families are our partners in every aspect of learning and development. We build trusting relationships and maintain open communication, ensuring families feel empowered and supported.

Our admissions procedures ensure our setting is inclusive to all families in our community and our staff team strives to support each family regardless of their background so that they feel involved, valued and welcome. No family is discriminated against when applying for a place at our setting.

"Partnership working is crucial for practitioners to understand and respond to the needs of all children." *(EYFS, 2025 – Positive Relationships)*

We work closely with external professionals such as speech and language therapists, health visitors, and educational psychologists, ensuring holistic and joined-up support for every child.

Our office team liaise with the local authority to disseminate information about food vouchers and support available for our EYPP families. We have an outdoor noticeboard, sensitively positioned, to inform families about local support available such as the Family Hub or Family Corner workshops.

We have one DSL and two DDSLs in our Management team; they work collaboratively so that there are always at least two safeguarding representatives onsite each day. The DSL and DDSLs liaise efficiently with social workers, MASH, encompass professionals and other agencies in order to ensure we are providing the highest quality of care to our disadvantaged or vulnerable families.

Senior Management meet weekly to discuss and monitor our vulnerable children so that no child slips through the net.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact

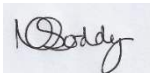
We monitor inclusion continuously, analysing progress data, engagement, and wellbeing for individuals and groups (SEND, EYPP, EAL, etc.).

We evaluate whether barriers have been removed or reduced and whether children feel they belong, are engaged, and can achieve their potential. We encourage children to reflect on a regular basis on their own self-growth and give them the tools to express their feelings in a safe and nurturing environment.

The SENCo and Management team review this policy annually to ensure alignment with the EYFS and Ofsted frameworks, setting actions for continuous improvement. The Preschool Committee are integral to ensuring no family is excluded from our community and will treat each family individually to support their needs, for example, assisting with financial aid.

Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if guidance changes. It will be shared with staff and families and reflected in our staff induction and ongoing training programme.

Signed:  (Manager, St Mark's Preschool)

Date: 1/11/25