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Creating an inclusive school community: Central Street Infant and Nursery School

URN: 107507

Local authority: Calderdale

Date published: 3 February 2012

Reference: 120106

Brief description

Knowledge of different types of families ensures that all parents and carers regardless of their sexuality and backgrounds are welcomed into this inclusive school community. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 ensures that pupils whose parents and carers or family members are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) feel included. The school has successfully tackled homophobic language, attitudes and behaviour.

Overview – the provider’s message

‘Everyone is different. Everyone is special’. A core part of our ethos in our inclusive school community is celebrating difference and diversity as a way of developing tolerance, understanding and respect for each other. We appreciate that everyone is different and everyone is special and we ensure that every individual child and adult feels good about themselves and feels a valued member of our school community. Children with high self-esteem have a positive attitude to all aspects of school life and feel confident to cope with a range of situations in life. SEAL (Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning) is an integral part of our school life and supports children in developing the tools and social skills to be confident learners and accepting of each other’s variety of lifestyles and beliefs. Our main aim is to give our children valuable life skills that will further support them as they move on.’



Kathryn Godfrey, Headteacher

The good practice in detail

Setting the tone and maintaining consistency

A number of parents and carers of pupils at the school are in same-sex relationships. In Reception in particular around a quarter of the children have same-sex relationships in some part of their family. Senior leaders have created a school with an open-minded, accepting and inclusive atmosphere. The strong drive to promote and cater for all forms of diversity begins even before children take up their places at the school. An example is the excellent work the school does with transgender pupils. Transgender pupils are taken seriously. Staff consult parents and carers fully and they take steps to ensure the pupils are able to thrive and achieve as well as they can. This involves a high level of tolerance, empathy and support. The school appreciates that a boy may prefer to be known as a girl and have a girl's name and similarly a girl may have a girl's name but wants to dress as and be a boy. Where this is the case, staff liaise closely with each other and with parents and take effective and successful steps to ensure the pupil is fully included in the activities and can be themselves. This individualised approach extends to after-school clubs and activities, where the school also sometimes supports transgender pupils from other schools.



Staff, parents and carers and pupils confirm that prejudice-based bullying and inappropriate comments about pupils' families are exceptionally rare. Key to the school's success in promoting positive behaviour and in preventing bullying, harassment and intimidation in school is the clear vision of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. However, they

do not work in isolation. The involvement and commitment of the whole staff are further reasons for the school's success. All staff, including lunchtime organisers and teaching assistants, have received information and training in how to deal with homophobic language and how to work positively with different families. The training combined with clear commitment from all adults ensures a consistency of approach and means that whichever adults are in school on a given day, the message of openness and tolerance is the same.

The importance of relationships with families

Another key to this success is the staff's detailed knowledge of its community. This begins with home visits before a child starts at the school. During these visits, staff establish what parents and carers would like to be called and known as at the school. For example, some children prefix each of their parent's names with 'mum' or 'dad', for example 'mum Pat' and 'mum Dawn'. The school then passes this and other information to all staff, who consistently use the same terminology. This enables the team of staff who work in the office, for example, to welcome and include all parents and carers without making assumptions about pupils' families. As a result, same-sex families are treated as any other relationships; all parents and carers feel included in their children's school; and terminology is used consistently across the school.

Communication with families is strong, frequent and effective. The school ensures that all its communications convey respect and value to all types of family. For example, they send out 'family' questionnaires rather than 'parent' questionnaires, thus including all carers and encompassing families that may consist of two fathers and two mothers as well as heterosexual parents and carers. The school uses a wide range of communication methods to ensure that parents and carers feel informed, are involved in tackling any inappropriate behaviour and feel a part of the school ethos. One response to a family questionnaire said, 'We appreciate the effort that the school makes to create an open inclusive environment that is accepting of diversity. We feel confident that if any issues were to come up, for example homophobia, from anyone in the school, that it would be dealt with appropriately and sensitively and our daughter would be supported throughout the incident'.

Pupils' behaviour



Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is excellent. This is because there is a comprehensive and consistently applied positive behaviour system in place which rewards tolerance, kindness, friendliness and a willingness to 'have a try'. Pupils know that bullying and behaviours such as the use of homophobic language are wrong and have been shown the impact it can have on others' feelings and achievement. One of the successful behavioural strategies in place is based on 'I feel, I think, I choose'. This ensures that pupils

continuously reflect on their feelings and are encouraged to make positive choices. Children in Reception have a 'thinking spot' to go to in order to reflect about how they are feeling and the actions they have chosen.

Embracing and celebrating difference

SEAL is at the heart of the curriculum and the school takes a lead role on this within the local authority. Diversity and inclusion are threaded through the curriculum. Staff have consulted same-sex parents and carers and involved [Stonewall](#) to identify resources that could be used effectively in the school. Books and resources include a range of different families. For example, teachers use a [book](#) in lessons and assemblies entitled *Difference is amazing, let's celebrate it*. The impact of this approach on pupils is significant because it ensures that same-sex relationships are normal and 'no big deal'. Posters and pictures around the school, leaflets and images are selected to reflect the full range of families. This enables pupils to feel that the school and the curriculum is meaningful and applies to them. In turn, this helps them to achieve.



Staff are careful with their language in class to ensure that all pupils feel involved. They work hard to not make assumptions about families. When making mothers' day cards for example, pupils can opt to make as many cards as they need and can send them to someone at home or someone else they are close to.



Equally, the staff are unafraid to tackle potentially controversial issues. For example, in one lesson about families a boy chose to tell the class that he had 'no father' because he was born from frozen sperm and had two mums. Another pupil in the same lesson from a heterosexual Christian family did not understand how this could happen and did not believe there could be a family without a father. The teacher abandoned the lesson and created a circle time and alternative lesson about different families to ensure that all pupils regardless of background were valued. The teacher then discussed the lesson with parents and carers at the end of the day.

Provider background

[Central Street Infant and Nursery School](#) is in Hebden Bridge. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. Almost all pupils are White British. The school hosts the local authority's autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) provision, which accommodates up to six pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is well above average.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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