



Guidance for Policy on Inclusion in Pre-school Services

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide pre-school services with the regulatory requirements for the specific policy on Inclusion as set out by the [Child Care Act \(1991\) Early Years Services Regulations \(2016\)](#). This document sets out the core requirements that should be addressed in this policy, as well as prompts and considerations that will support registered providers to ensure that their policy and procedures are fully developed and are reflected in the practices in their service.

The information in this document should be applied to the specific policy on Inclusion and the accompanying procedures of the service. This document should be read in conjunction with Tusla's [Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services](#), the [Quality and Regulatory Framework](#), the [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](#), and (where appropriate) AIM's [Role of the Inclusion Coordinator](#).

This document is for reference only. It should not be assumed that the guidance provided is comprehensive or that it provides a definitive answer in every situation.

Further resources are available in [Appendix 1](#).

Regulatory Requirements of this Policy

Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Service Regulations (2016), Schedule 5. 1 (h)

In relation to a pre-school service, an inclusion policy means a policy specifying the manner in which it is ensured that the needs (including the physical, emotional and intellectual needs and the religious beliefs (if any) of all pre-school children attending the service are addressed in the service.

2.0 Core policy requirements

A Policy Statement is recommended for this policy alongside the core requirements as set out further in this document. The policy statement should set out the service's commitment to ensuring that the service celebrates diversity and that all children's needs and rights are met in a culture of full inclusion, respect, equity and equality, and meaningful participation.

Requirement 1

The policy describes how the service creates a culture of inclusion, equality of access and acceptance.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) The measures to be taken to ensure that the service delivers an inclusive, welcoming and accessible environment for all children
- (b) The service's commitment to the importance of respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and sets out procedures to support and nurture their establishment.
- (c) The procedures for appropriate information, training and professional development for staff to ensure that their practices are supporting the needs of all children attending the service, and in full consideration of children's abilities or disabilities.
- (d) The ethos and approach in the service in relation to the celebration of religious and non-religious beliefs, customs, and traditions of the child and his/her family and community. *This aspect of the policy should reflect the service's mission statement and should also be included in information for parents/guardians.*
- (e) That the service provides an emotional environment where staff demonstrate warmth and affection consistently to all children in the service.
- (f) That staff are cognisant of children who may be living in adversity or may be living without consistent expression of warmth and affection outside of the service.
- (g) The measures to ensure that all children are listened to and responded to in the service, and that staff are cognisant of children who may have limited opportunities to be listened to and responded to, outside of the service.
- (h) The appropriate information, training and professional development requirements for staff to ensure that their practices are supporting all children attending the service.

Requirement 2

The policy describes how the physical environment supports inclusion and reflects diversity.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) The measures to ensure that the layout of rooms and areas within the service meet the individual needs of all children.
- (b) The provision of developmentally appropriate play and early learning activities, both indoors and outdoors, for all children in the service.
- (c) That materials, equipment and resources in the service promote inclusion, are developmentally appropriate and are accessible to all children.

Requirement 3

The policy details how the service recognises and responds to bias or discrimination.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That the service will respond to any discriminatory practices observed or reported in the service, and the response, including actions taken, will be documented and recorded.
- (b) That parents/guardians are invited to optionally share information on enrolment on the religious or non-religious beliefs, customs and traditions that are celebrated within the child's family or community.
- (c) The provision for the celebrating of religious festivities and traditions during the year, to support and appropriately reflect the beliefs (if any) of individual children attending the service and their families and communities.
- (d) That parents/guardians are informed about any planned celebrations prior to the event; that all parents/guardians can request that their child does not attend a religious celebration, and that there is another equally enjoyable activity planned for their child.

Requirement 4

The policy states how the service ensures that the needs of all children are addressed.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That the service will work collaboratively with parents and providers of support and specialist services as required, to meet the physical, emotional, social and cognitive needs and developmental requirements of all children.

3.0 Best Practice in developing and implementing an Inclusion Policy

In addition to the regulatory requirements for this policy as set out in this document, service providers can enhance the quality of practice in the implementation of the Inclusion Policy in the service. In this section, best practice in this policy area is outlined and further information is signposted where available.

- The implementation of the policy should reflect Siolta Standards, in particular Standard 14 [Identity and Belonging](#).
- An inclusive early years culture involves:
 - Working in partnership and openly communicating with each child's parents/guardians about the child's needs and requirements.
 - Actively promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and anti-bias approaches and practices, so that all children and families feel welcome, comfortable, respected, included, and valued.
 - Recognising and valuing all children as unique and learning and developing at their own pace.
 - Utilising the AIM programme to support children where this is appropriate.
 - Staff modelling inclusive and equitable behaviours, words, gestures and body language
 - Making reflective practice, training and development opportunities available to staff.
 - Actively engaging children in making decisions about all matters that affect them, making provision to support children's participation in multiple ways including non-verbally, and in accordance with the child's wishes and preferences.
 - Respecting and celebrating diversity in the life of each child, their family and community.
 - Understanding that children have individual needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect and represented within the daily life of the service.
 - Creating space for staff to reflect on their own attitudes and values.

4.0 Appendix

4.1 Supporting Information

- AIM: [Access and Inclusion Model](#)
- AIM: [Universal Design Guidelines](#)
- Aistear Siolta: [Practice Guide](#)
- Barnardos: [Equality and Diversity in Early Childhood Care and Education](#)
- Better Start: [My Inclusion Plan](#)
- Better Start: [National Early Years Quality Development](#)
- Dept of Education and Youth: [Insights - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.](#)
- Early Childhood Ireland: [Promoting Inclusion and Diversity](#)
- Early Childhood Ireland: [Taking AIM at Workplace Inclusion.](#)
- NCCA. [Aistear Principles of early learning and Development](#)
- IHRC. [Equality Laws in Ireland](#)
- LINC Programme: [Leading Inclusive Early Childhood Education](#)
- NCCA. [Aistear Principles of early learning and Development](#)
- OECD: [Equity, diversity and inclusion in early childhood education and care](#)

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