

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2024

Adapted from Forest School Association policy with kind permission of the FSA



Context

Globally, 2020 brought a unique set of challenges, and particularly to marginalised groups: the impact of Black Lives Matter rippled through society; the #MeToo movement saw prominent figures called out for discriminatory behaviour. In our own sector, lockdown highlighted an inequity of access to nature.

We recognise that a lack of diversity is an issue across many sectors of employment. For example, research by the UK's National Autistic Society (NAS) shows that the figures around employment of people with autism in the UK are still very low. According to Policy Exchange 2017 only 0.06% of environmental sector professionals are Visible Minority Ethnic (VME), which is the second lowest ranking obtained in this study.

As a result of these events and statistics, many significant organisations in the outdoor sector are acknowledging and addressing this lack of diversity by rewriting policies and implementing new strategies.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

In line with our values, Wheatfen Forest School CIC is committed to providing 'Quality Forest School for all' as promoted by the FSA.

It is committed to developing an organisation that is free from all forms of unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination. "The Equality Act 2010 brings together, harmonises and in some respects extends existing equality law. It aims to make the law more consistent, clearer and easier to follow in order to make society fairer." 1

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Along with the FSA, Wheatfen Forest School CIC also adopts the requirements of the public sector's Equality Duty in recognition of the extent of our work with the education and health sectors: to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The 2010 Equality Act lists the following characteristics as protected and must be considered:

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- LGBTQ+
- Disability
- Age
- Pregnancy and Motherhood
- Marriage or Civil partnership status
- Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)

The FSA believes that this policy will also positively impact those who identify as:

- Visible Minority Ethnic
- of a low socio-economic standing
- having mental health issues
- neurodivergent.

We are committed to addressing issues of discrimination in relation to the mental wellbeing, political belief, gender and gender identity, sexual preference or orientation, disability, marital or partnership status, race, nationality, ethnic origin, heritage identity, religious or spiritual identity, age or socio-

economic class of individuals and groups working for and engaging with Wheatfen Forest School CIC.

The emerging values within the FSA should be reflected in this policy and its ensuing strategy.

The Forest School approach, as defined by the ethos and principles, is intrinsically inclusive, having its roots in a broad base of educational and environmental thinking from around the globe. Whilst Forest School delivery has reached rural and urban, SEND, ethnically and gender diverse groups, Wheatfen Forest School CIC beneficiaries, staff and board do not yet reflect this diversity.

In order to ensure that those who work for and engage with Wheatfen Forest School CIC are truly reflective of the diverse demographic of the UK, and to achieve 'quality Forest School for all', we need to update our strategy and ensure its implementation.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and directors in all of their activities on behalf of Wheatfen Forest School CIC.

Aims

- To increase the diversity of the WFS's staff, board, and participants to reflect our society at large by promoting equity and valuing diversity.
- To ensure that our forest school provision will be accessible for all members of society who may wish to access them.
- To advocate for the needs of all our staff and participants, and to treat all people with respect.
- To do our part to support the wider Forest School community in the pursuit of making quality Forest School accessible for all.
- To build strong, cohesive Forest School practise and to promote positive community relationships.
- To collaborate with other organisations promoting equity and valuing diversity.

This policy is an intentionally brief statement of the values and commitments of the Wheatfen Forest School CIC. It will be reviewed annually, taking a lead from the FSA.

Glossary of terms & abbreviations

- **Equity** – equity is often conflated with the term "Equality" (meaning sameness). In fact, true equity implies that an individual may need to experience or receive something different (not equal) in order to maintain fairness and access.
- **Diversity** – the recognition that there are many different groups of people in society; the practice of including and involving people from a range of different groups, including but not limited to, social and ethnic backgrounds, different genders, sexual orientations, and disabilities.
- **Inclusion** – the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised. It is the process whereby different groups or individuals are culturally and socially accepted, valued and welcomed. This is an organisational effort.
- **VME (Visible Minority Ethnic)** – the sum of people who self-define their ethnicity as other than White British. Includes the Asian, Black, Other and Mixed categories only.
- **LGBTQ+** – including, but not limited to, individuals who self-define as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Ally, Pansexual, Agender, Gender Queer, Bigender, Gender Variant, Pangender.

- **Neurodiversity** – the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits regarded as part of normal variation in the human population. Neurodiversity is the idea that neurological variations are known and valued as any other human variation. These variations can include, but are not limited to: Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD or dyspraxia), Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), Tourette Syndrome (TS), Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and others.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85022/vcs-association-perception.pdf