

# INTRODUCTION

As practitioners, it is vital that we understand the recent changes in legislation, best practice and expectations that have taken place since the introduction of the Prevent Duty and the common inspection framework. It is important also that we understand how to integrate these changes into our settings and our everyday practice.

In this book we will explore the meaning of:

- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Individual Liberty
- Mutual Respect and Tolerance

We will also explore how to evidence this through our daily practice and planning.

We will look in depth at the Prevent Duty and how this affects our policies, procedures and relationships with staff, children and families. We will also hear the views and opinions of Early Years' settings and childminders, Early Years' lecturers and local authority advisors.

The idea that we as a British nation have a set of values and ethics that should be adhered to is not a new idea. However, if we asked someone 100, 50 or even 10 years ago what those values were, they would probably be very different to the ones that have been outlined by the government today.

Initially there was limited guidance that explained to the Early Years' sector what the introduction of British values would mean in practice. As a result, many practitioners and settings would celebrate 'Fish and Chip Fridays' or plan to have tea with the Queen, without fully realising the underlying message of inclusion and support for all members of society. As time has passed, more practitioners are realising that British values are about kindness, acceptance and respect, while still giving us the opportunity to celebrate who we are as individuals, settings and communities within our nation, and whilst celebrating being part of a global community.

'British values' is a term that we in the Early Years have been dealing with since 2014, but what *are* British values? Why have they been introduced now? How do these values affect us as practitioners? What will be the impact upon the children we teach? This book will explore what effective practice looks like in Early Years' settings across the country. We will look at policy and procedure, the environment and the 'Prevent Duty'.

## WHERE DID IT ALL START?

In March 2014, Birmingham City Council revealed it was investigating a number of Muslim schools following a letter suggesting that there was a plot within these schools to install school governors who were sympathetic to teaching a strong Islamist or Salafist-based curriculum and ethos. The letter claimed that head teachers had been pushed from their posts, and teachers who were not sympathetic were marginalised.

The announcement came after pressure from head teachers, police and the Department for Education following claims that senior council officials had been aware of the allegations for some time, indeed well before the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter was received, and no formal attempt had been made to investigate the original complaint.

The ‘Trojan Horse’ letter referred to a document that was allegedly sent to an unnamed person in Bradford detailing how Tahir Alam, a well-known figure in education circles in Birmingham, had ‘fine-tuned the “Trojan Horse” [operation] so that it is totally invisible to the naked eye and allows us to operate under the radar’.

It then goes on to describe a five-stage process to remove head teachers and take control of schools:

- Identify your schools.
- Select a group of Salafi parents.
- Put our own governor in.
- Identify key staff to disrupt the school from within.
- Create an anonymous letter and PR campaign.

The letter concludes that ‘all these things will work towards wearing the Head down, removing his/her resolve and weakening their mind-set so they eventually just give up’.

In light of these concerns and reports from both the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the Department of Education, the House of Commons ordered an investigation into how this type of activity was allowed to go unchallenged. The report published in July 2014 made 15 recommendations including the recommendation for Ofsted to revise the then-current inspection framework to incorporate identification of early indicators of extremism.

Although the introduction of British values came as a result of activities within one sector of the community, we must be open-minded to all cultures which face ongoing challenges with integration in to a multi-cultural society.

The recommendations from this report were the basis of the changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework and inspection systems that we have in place today.

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## BRITISH VALUES

The Early Years Foundations Stage framework has always provided statutory guidance for settings and practitioners. The introduction of British values fits within this template under the headings of Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Understanding of the World. Ofsted inspects British values under these headings and base their judgements on how well the four themes of **Democracy**, **Rule of Law**, **Individual Liberty** and **Mutual Respect and Tolerance** are embedded within practice. Here, we will break down what each theme means to practitioners and the children for whom we care.

### DEMOCRACY

Democracy by definition means governance by the people. In the United Kingdom, we live in a democratic society; we take for granted our right to vote for the party that will, in our opinion, be the best to govern our country for a set period of time based upon a manifesto of ideas and promises. We understand that just because we voted for our chosen party, it doesn't mean that they will necessarily win the election, as all votes have to be taken into account and the majority wins. We are able to understand this as we have learned about the process through schools, experienced

our grandparents and parents voting and, finally, being able to vote ourselves once we turn 18 years of age. Through this process, we are empowered with the knowledge that our vote counts, that our opinion matters and we are, to some extent, part of the decision-making process.

When we involve the children democratically in their learning through asking for ideas, thoughts and suggestions, the children begin to feel valued, included and part of their own decision making.

As practitioners, sometimes it is too easy to plan a day, activity or interest focus without involving the children. We assume because we have spent hours on Pinterest looking for the perfect activity and carefully planned our goals to meet every child's next steps, that the children will be as excited about it as we are. But, without asking them or involving them in the planning process, we will only really know how interested they are once the activity has finished. This approach is almost like putting the cart before the horse! We need to reverse our thinking and start with the children: their likes, dislikes, interests and abilities. We can ask and value their input before we start to plan. When children are involved in their learning, they are excited to participate and willing to learn.

## Including the children's input

Below are some of the ways in which including the children's input can be done effectively.

### Planning

Children can be involved in the planning process of the setting and can provide a unique insight into medium- and short-term plans. Often, when we ask the children what they would like to do they come up with ideas that we hadn't thought of.

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Daily and weekly planning provide optimum opportunities for children to experience the outcomes of their input. Planning too far in advance is not as effective, as children's capacity to understand time is limited.

### Opportunities to vote

There are many opportunities for us to give our children the chance to vote. We do not have to create a ballot box and have secret votes; a simple show of hands is a good place to start. Outings, trips, activities and continuous provision-area enhancements (literacy, maths, messy play and so forth) are just some of the ways to demonstrate a true democratic setting.

Consider next how to include and value the voices of other stakeholders such as parents/carers and extended families. Gone are the days where sending out a questionnaire before parents' evening was enough to prove active involvement.

### Termly direction meetings

Direction meetings at the start of each term are one way to involve parents in the self-evaluation and forward planning of the setting. Parents are invited to attend a meeting with managers and staff to discuss as a combined unit the current strengths, areas for development and the challenges facing the nursery in an informal environment.

### Questionnaires

Questionnaires still have their place, but they have to be meaningful, honest and you must be willing to act on the feedback you receive. Different types of questionnaires serve different purposes. A formal questionnaire may be handed out at parents' evening on a termly basis, while an informal questionnaire could

be used to ask what information sessions parents would benefit from that term or ask for a suggestion of the month.

### Boards: 'you said/we did'

When you are open to receiving information, people will feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and views. If you ask the questions but do not act upon the feedback, people will stop answering the questions. One way to demonstrate you are listening to your families is to create a 'you said/we did' board. The board has to be updated and/or changed regularly to keep parents interested and involved. For example, one month you ask a question of the quality of your menus and what parents would like to see more or less of. The following month, when all the suggestions have been gathered, you can clearly show the percentage of respondents who are very happy, satisfied, neutral, not happy and how you have adapted your menus by displaying the old menu and a new menu based on their feedback. You can also show how the children are reacting to their new foods.

### Family outings

Once a term, invite your parents on a family trip. Ask parents where they would like to go and to make suggestions for the next outing. Try to ensure that the place that is chosen is one that is accessible to all families. Consider transport links for those who don't drive, cost for those on limited budgets and/or large families and how it will support children of different age groups.

### Social media

There is a huge rise in the number of people using social media, and for busy families it provides a way of contact and information sharing at a time that is convenient to them. For settings, it provides a way to share information, events, good

practice, photographs from the day and anecdotes to a large number of people quickly and easily.

## RULE OF LAW

Every country has their own laws that must be abided by. The laws are created to keep the people safe from harm and to maintain order in society. Rules in settings are no different; we expect children to follow rules that are designed to keep them and others safe. We need to support the understanding that individual behaviour affects others and that actions have consequences.

In order for children to follow rules, they must first understand what the rules are. Often we expect children to behave a certain way because of our own ideas and prejudices on what we deem to be acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. A more effective approach would be to define a set of expectations which has been discussed and agreed upon by management, staff and children.

The revised EYFS 2014 removed the requirement for a named behaviour management coordinator. This places responsibility on all staff as individuals to support and promote positive behaviour throughout the setting. The aim of this approach was to ensure that staff were able to deal with behaviours, both positive and negative, in an effective way.

Every setting will have their own ideas on how positive behaviour should be supported and how unacceptable behaviour is managed. For example, some settings will find it appropriate to use a 'time out' or 'reflection time', while other settings will feel that if positive behaviour is supported effectively, there will be no need for such strategies. There is no handbook or statutory guidance stating exactly what your behaviour management should look like, except for the guidance that is given under section 3.52 of the EYFS statutory guidance which states:

3.52. Providers are responsible for managing children's behaviour in an appropriate way. Providers must not give corporal punishment to a child. Providers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that corporal punishment is not given by any person who cares for or is in regular contact with a child, or by any person living or working in the premises where care is provided. Any early years' provider who fails to meet these requirements commits an offence. A person will not be taken to have used corporal punishment (and therefore will not have committed an offence), where physical intervention was taken for the purposes of averting immediate danger of personal injury to any person (including the child) or to manage a child's behaviour if absolutely necessary. Providers, including childminders, must keep a record of any occasion where physical intervention is used, and parents and/or carers must be informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

3.53. Providers must not threaten corporal punishment, and must not use or threaten any punishment which could adversely affect a child's well-being.

## **Embedding Rule of Law in practice**

When you consider how the Rule of Law is already embedded within your practice, I am certain that you will find lots of good practice. Below are some good-practice examples for you to consider.

### **Policy and procedures**

Having a clear, well-defined policy that is implemented in a consistent manner by all staff is the foundation stone for good practice. It is important that parents/carers and families be aware

of policies to ensure consistency for the children. (We will look in depth at policy and procedure in Chapter 2.)

### Child involvement

Children need to understand what is expected of them in terms of behaviour. One way of building on this is to allow the children to create the rules themselves. Ask them what is good behaviour and which behaviours they don't like. Allow the children to create a display for their golden rules, whether it be a board or a poster at their height. This will encourage children to remind themselves and others of what is expected.

### Parental involvement

Sometimes there can be a difference in expectations between home and nursery. This is not uncommon; however, these differences are not always known until an incident occurs. When nursery expectations are made clear in pre-registration materials, such as on the website and in the prospectus, parents have a chance to ask questions on practice and make an informed decision about whether this is the right setting for their child.

## INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY: FREEDOM FOR ALL

Liberty is defined as the freedom not to be constrained by another person's will, with the exception that one's will does not harm another. It doesn't mean that we can do whatever we like whenever we want. Individual liberty cannot have adverse effects on the wider group. Nursery life would become quite complicated if every child was able to access the entire continuous provision at all times without structure. We have a duty to meet the needs of the group as a whole and to ensure that when the children leave us that, as an individual, they are 'school ready'.

To help us create a balance that fosters Individual Liberty and conformity, we create routines that provide us with a structure for the day with elements of flexible planning. For example, circle/welcome time: we could tell the same story and sing the same songs and expect children to comply, or we could ask the children to be involved in a show-and-tell activity which would allow them the freedom to share something from home with the group and build upon their self-confidence.

As a sector, we are very good at adapting activities and areas to follow children's needs and interests, *but* we do have a tendency to restrict children's freedom in the name of health and safety.

We can become overprotective by restricting types of play and risk-taking in the name of keeping children safe. Does it take a brave setting to allow the use of real hammers and nails or one that will support the child through their learning process and allow them to judge the risk for themselves?

## Freedom of speech

We are all entitled to our opinions and are equally entitled to express those opinions again provided they do not hurt another person. This is firmly rooted in the Prevent Duty which we explore more in Chapter 4.

In settings, we need to promote the idea that children have a right to an opinion and that it is okay for someone else to have an opinion that is different. It is the ability to challenge or accept these differences that enables us to remain free and respectful. It is by allowing children to explore freely their likes, dislikes, similarities and differences that they create a positive sense of self-building, self-confidence and self-awareness.

Allowing children to make their own choices is a key element to promoting Individual Liberty. A supportive key-

person approach encourages children to explore the risks and challenges within the environment in a safe way while allowing them the time to consider the consequences of their actions.

## MUTUAL RESPECT AND TOLERANCE

In essence, mutual respect is treating others as you wish to be treated. Tolerance generally means being open-minded without prejudice to the views and beliefs of others. While it is important that Mutual Respect and Tolerance relates to every person regardless of ethnicity, beliefs or religion, we find these values becoming increasingly important as diversity grows.

In the year ending September 2015, immigration to the United Kingdom stood at 617,000. The most culturally diverse cities in 2015 were London and its surrounding boroughs, Leicester, Slough, Luton and Birmingham. With the number of immigrants entering Britain increasing, we find ourselves rapidly learning about other cultures from other cultures and adapting our settings to be even more inclusive.

Early Years' settings have a legal duty to meet the requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010 and a moral duty to welcome families of all cultural backgrounds. It is our aim to create a culture of inclusivity, an environment that is welcoming and a curriculum that supports a meaningful understanding of the world today.

Within areas of greater diversity, it is easier to create this culture of inclusivity as settings are able to draw on the knowledge and expertise of the local community. Areas that are less diverse must look further afield to make the wider community come to them if they are not to create a tokenistic environment.

Local places of worship such as churches, mosques, synagogues and gurdwaras are a fantastic place to start and are open to sharing information about their beliefs and the community that

they support. Other community, private or voluntary groups can be found on the Internet or in the local paper and again are almost always willing to share their experiences with young children.

It is important that we not forget our own culture in the exploration of others. We must celebrate what makes Britain great – our local and national history – and what it means to be British.

Celebrations of all cultures must be meaningful and provide an opportunity for all children to explore other cultures. Food, clothing, stories, dance and music are all interactive ways to bring celebrations to life. Involving parents in celebrations is also a vital part of our teaching. By educating the whole family, we enable knowledge and remove ignorance, breaking down barriers to prejudice.

There are those who disagree with these values or challenge that they are the correct values to represent ‘Britishness’; however, these are the definitions that we have been given by the government to provide us with a stepping stone on which to build and reflect.