

INCLUSION—EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Newham schools have always had a very inclusive ethos. Being in a Borough with such diversity it is impossible not to want to make sure everyone is included and feel a part of the school. February is particularly a month when the nation focusses on different aspects of inclusion and diversity. As a citizen of the UK, the protected characteristics are central to the equality laws.



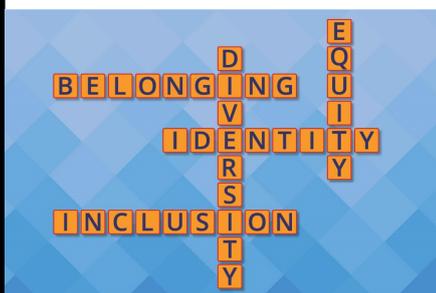
You will be aware that our schools have quite high numbers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In fact, Dersingham, Calverton and Central Park have more children with needs than many other schools. Calverton is also a Resource Provision school for autistic pupils, which means children who need provision beyond what they would get in a regular classroom. All 3 schools are looking carefully at the curriculum our children with more complex needs receive and how we can make it as bespoke as possible. You might start to hear language around ‘tiers’ in the schools. This is so we can make sure children with additional needs get the best curriculum that is suited to them. We are very keen not to label children and ensure that if a child does fall into a particular tier it is because that curriculum is the best for them at that time and they can move to a different tier when they are ready.



We are also mindful that our children develop a level of independence that is appropriate to them. The national funding for SEND is insufficient and therefore the money the Local Authority gets becomes insufficient. Over a number of years now, the schools have moved away from 1:1 models of working and adults work with a number of complex needs children. Whilst it is not ideal, as further bespoke work could be done if every child had an adult alongside them, it does help with their growth in becoming as independent as possible. At Central Park last week I was pleasantly surprised when one of our autistic children held a conversation with me and was talking about his aspirations. All our children can achieve, some very small steps which is a huge step for the family; some who make such rapid progress are likely to go on to lead semi-independent lives. Many of the children are challenging to work with and we do not underestimate the commitment required to help them have the best start in life day in, day out.



Linked to the wider agenda for equality each school has to log any incidents of children using discriminatory or derogatory language so we can report this to Governors. Thankfully these incidents are not very frequent but children need to know that they cannot make unkind comments or act in an unkind way. However, in many cases, where the incidents are recorded, children are unable to say what the word they have used means or did not know it was bad to say. A lot of the time the language used is usually when a child is annoyed or angry. Language of a racist, sexist or homophobic nature is particularly worrying. Use of this language is offensive and as children grow up they can easily get themselves into a lot of trouble if reported to the police.



Children are generally very respectful to each other and they know what is right and what is wrong. Children with a disability, from a different religion, live in a different family set up, etc. are not treated differently in our schools, they are welcomed and treated equally. However, children do hear things on the TV, see things on social media, hear things from other family members or watch unsuitable material in films. Just as we do in school, if you hear your child using words or phrases that can upset people then educate them as to why it does upset people and how it is against the law to talk in such a way.

COMPLAINTS

The schools understand that you will not always be fully happy with them or the actions they take. The schools complaints policy is on the school website. Please do take time to look over the policy so you know what to do and what you can expect to happen. There are 3 basic stages and each moves to the next stage if you remain unhappy:

1. Talk to the class teacher.
2. Arrange to meet the Headteacher.
3. Take your complaint to the Governing Board.

Thankfully, most complaints turn out to be concerns and they can be addressed quite quickly. Complaints do follow a process and should not be taken to the Headteacher until it has tried to be resolved at the first stage.



SCHOOL MEALS

A reminder that the Government is still providing some funding to the Local Authority to issue vouchers or meals to children over the holiday period, to those entitled to Free School Meals. The schools have all seen a huge increase in the number of families eligible for these vouchers since the beginning of the pandemic. Make sure you let the school and Local Authority know if your financial circumstances change and find out if you are eligible. It is a simple form that needs to be completed online and we can help you with that.

A reminder that schools get a pupil premium grant based upon the number of pupils claiming free school meals. Even if your difficult financial situation is short-lived, the school will get additional funding for the next 6 years to provide more specific programmes, small group tuition or experiences for your child.

A reminder that schools get a pupil premium grant based upon the number of pupils claiming free school meals. Even if your difficult financial situation is short-lived, the school will get additional funding for the next 6 years to provide more specific programmes, small group tuition or experiences for your child.

ONLINE SAFETY

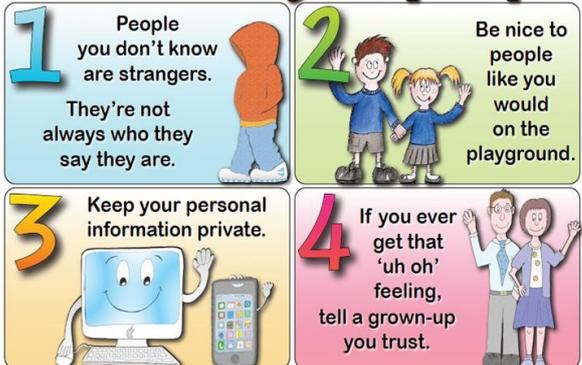
Tuesday 8th February is / was Internet Safety Day. The schools build into their curriculum sessions that cover online safety. Whilst this takes place in some form all the time, Internet Safety Day gives the opportunity to look at this in a bit more detail.



Children can be far more advanced in their use of IT and computers than many parents and know how to get around filters, passwords and blocks so it is very important you are aware what your child is doing when they are online.

Units covered in the Relationship and Sex Education programme look at safe, respectful online relationships. It is quite common to hear in the news of young children that have met up with someone they were chatting to online. Fortunately, in most cases, no harm comes of these meetings. Unfortunately, that is not always true. Reiterate these top tips at home.

Our eSafety Top Tips!



HALF-TERM HOLIDAYS

The schools break up for half-term at the end of the week, Friday 11th February. Children return on Monday 21st February. I hope you can spend time together as families—go places or do things. You can never count on the weather at this time of year but getting out in the open is lovely. This link <https://www.newham.gov.uk/downloads/file/4034/activity-pack> provides some activities ideas from Newham's Winter Pack which might be nice to do as a family.

As the country gradually gets back to a level of normality, please take care and continue to remember the Covid-safe measures. Newham still has high levels of Covid and unvaccinated people as well as those with other vulnerabilities. Enjoy the holiday.

Darren Williams, Executive Headteacher

