



VbE Early Years Quality Mark Accreditation

Recognising exceptional practice in Early Years settings through Values-based Education



Welcoming message from Dr. Neil Hawkes, Founder of VbE

'I believe that Early Years Education is of crucial importance if society is to flourish. This is the foundation of all stages of education. It is in the early years that children start to make sense of the world and their place in it, and begin the process of answering the question, 'What sort of person do I want to be in the world?'

Every child deserves to grow in an environment where they feel valued, celebrated, and empowered to achieve their utmost. Schools and settings that create an intentionally values-based ethos and curriculum make this a reality.

Values-based Education is a philosophy and world-wide movement for unlocking a deeply human approach to education. It offers the inspiration and pathway for enrichment through a truly inclusive and hope-filled culture, which acknowledges the dignity, inherent worth, of each individual.

Values-based Education seeks to support the hearts and minds of children and adults. We champion the schools and settings that give children the emotional, ethical, environmental and spiritual basis to succeed academically and to flourish personally. Those of us passionate about both a values-based approach and early years' education want to build on the success of VbE in schools, providing bespoke materials for the early years' practitioners and settings.

I would like to give heartfelt thanks to all early years' practitioners - you are real heroes. Through your invaluable work, you send messages of hope to the future.'

Dr. Neil Hawkes, Founder of VbE, June 2025

Setting Information	
Setting Name	
Setting Type (Reception Class/Nursery Class/Nursery School/Pre-School/Day Nursery/Childminder etc)	



Setting Address, Postcode and Email	
Setting Telephone Number	
Local Authority	
Supervisor/ Manager Email	
Values-Based Education Leader and Email	
Number of children on roll Number of children per session in each group/room (approx.)	
Date of Previous VbE Quality Mark (if applicable)	



What is it?

The Values Education Quality Mark is a validation of a setting's exceptional practice in meeting the Early Years Statutory Framework through a Values-based approach. Recognition is given through the award of the unique Values-based Education logo by the International Values Education Trust (IVET).

Training is available through our advisors to settings who wish to develop or embed their effective practice.

The early years values-based education accreditation is a point-in time consideration of the way in which a setting is values-based. It is not an inspection to wider criteria.

Why do it?

- To acknowledge and celebrate outstanding practice as a Values-based Setting.
- To recognise the setting's commitment to high aspirations and to its culture of continuous improvement.
- To value the hard work that all staff engage in on a daily basis.
- To provide recognition of success to parents/carers and the local community.
- To contribute to the setting's self-evaluation process.
- To demonstrate commitment to the Early Years Foundation Stage and OFSTED requirements.

Who can apply?

Any setting that feels it offers exceptional practice and impact through a values-based philosophy. There is no 'blueprint' as such for this - and this is part of this philosophy's intrinsic beauty. However, values experts believe that exceptional settings are characterised by positive values-based practice in the following areas and that these headings and criteria will help settings define and audit their practice:

- A whole organisational strategy to support Values-based approaches.
- The quality of provision including care, teaching and learning practices and the "Values" curriculum, both explicit and embedded
- The attitudes and practices of staff, their personal development and well being
- The behaviours of children, their personal development and well being
- The physical, aesthetic and communal environment
- The involvement and support of parents/carers and the community
- The over-arching focus on valuing and achievement, especially relating to the Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.



What will we need to demonstrate?

Key Indicators of a values-based setting:

- A setting's agreement to underpin all aspects with their chosen values.
- These values underpin the ethos of the setting. The climate for learning is consequently happy, calm and purposeful, promoting quality care and learning.
- The physical environment reflects the setting's values.
- Values are an integral part all activities. There is an explicit focus on the characteristics of effective teaching and learning; playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically. The focus is on the formation of caring, civil and well-educated people.
- Values are reflected in the setting's aims, policies and communication to parents/carers.
- The individual is valued and is a focus on creating and maintaining positive relationships.
- Staff have agreed to model the values and a high level of consistency exists in adult behaviour.
- There is a focus on nurturing and developing children's' emotional intelligence and mental health.
- Space is given for quiet moments of calmness and reflection.
- There is an emphasis on developing children's ethical vocabulary and self-esteem.
- Everyone in the setting recognises and takes responsibility for self-improvement and high levels of happiness and achievement.
- There is regular review of the process and impact of Values-based Education.



Who will evidence this?

A Values-based Early Years setting must be recognised by and reflected through each member of the setting community:

- The setting's Leader
- The Values Coordinator (if different)
- Staff
- Children
- Parents/Carers
- Visitors
- Governors/Trustees/Owners (if relevant)

How can we evidence our work?

There are many ways to evidence your commitment to values-based education and its impact in your setting. Here are some suggestions:

- Displays
- Photographs
- Website
- Children's activities



- Self-Evaluation
- Curriculum plans
- OFSTED and other external monitoring reports.
- Development Plan
- Staff Meeting minutes
- Values Policy or statement
- Prospectus
- Policies
- Details of Values-based events
- Examples of newsletters
- References from minutes of meetings
- Evidence of family learning activities
- Parent/carers questionnaire responses
- Evidence of monitoring procedures
- Discussion with children, staff, governors/trustees/owners and parents/carers
- Films of events



What is the process of application?

- Contact the VbE office info@valuesbasededucation.com
- The office will ask a VbE Quality Mark Assessor to contact you.
- Complete the VbE Early Years Audit Tool.
- Send the Audit Tool to your Values Quality Mark assessor.
- Arrange setting's validation visit.
- Confirmation of award or ways forward to achieving the award.

How much will it cost?

The only cost to the setting is for a validation visit by a Values-based Education Accredited Assessor, which is £300 plus costs.*

How long will the award last?

The award lasts for 4 years, after which the setting reappplies. You are expected to review the award yourselves on a yearly basis.

* Costs are for travel

A bursary is available to settings which can show severe financial hardship



How to complete the form

Read the criteria carefully.

In the *comments* box, make brief notes on how you meet the criteria.

You may wish to keep a portfolio of evidence to show to your Values Quality Mark assessor. To ease workload, keep this to a minimum, only including items which are not on the website or displayed around the setting.

Your early years VbE accreditor will spend up to half a day with you discussing with you the audit and evidence that you choose to present. Please remember that the listed evidence in each section is a suggestion only and that additional or different forms of evidence may well be valuable.

1. Embrace: Do you have an organisational strategy to support Values-based Education in your setting?

Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. There is a clear values-based approach to provision, reflected in key documents.	Plans, policies, newsletters, development plan, website	
b. Professional development in terms of a values-based approach is integral to staff and children's entitlement.	Professional development record	
c. The setting's chosen values intentionally underpin its ethos and practice.	Discussion with leaders, plans, policies, newsletters, website	

2. Embrace: Do all members of staff embody your values-based approach?

Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. All staff consciously model values, demonstrating positive interpersonal skills.	Conversations with practitioners	
b. All staff understand how the setting's chosen values approach underpin their work.	Conversations with practitioners	
c. All staff feel they contribute to the ethos and work of the setting and see how their roles make a valuable contribution.	Conversations with practitioners	

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3. Embrace: Do you offer an enabling learning environment in line with your values-based approach?

Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. The climate for learning is happy, calm and purposeful, promoting quality teaching and learning and personal development.	A learning walk, website, photographs	
b. The learning environment and resources enable children to meet and get to know about values through structured and unstructured play, social times, books and songs and social interactions.	Observation of learning environment books, outdoor and indoor learning areas, displays.	

c. Children develop positive emotional and mental health through purposeful provision.	Case studies Conversations with practitioners	
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4. Empower: Do you offer all children learning experiences in line with your values-based approach?		
Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. Activities are planned around the needs of the children, and individual needs are recognised and provided for.	Planning, discussion	
b. Values are implicitly taught through the experiences offered to children across the session/day.	Observation, photos, videos	
c. Values are explicitly taught through the experiences offered to children in the Prime Areas of Learning.	Planning and observation, photos, videos	
d. Values demonstrably support and	Planning and	

scaffold the opportunities for Effective Learning; playing and exploring, active learning creating and thinking critically.	observation, photos, videos	
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5. Empower: Does children's behaviour, attitude to learning, personal development and wellbeing, reflect your values-based approach?		
Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. A values-based approach underpins expectations of behaviour & practice.	Policies; observations	
b. A values-based approach demonstrably informs the development of character, personal development, wellbeing, emotional & mental health.	Policies; observations	
c. Children show a high degree of personal autonomy and can begin to talk about/show that they understand their feelings and emotions.	Observations, conversations, case studies	

d. Children new to the setting are settled in sensitively. They then show positive attitudes to learning and are happy to arrive in the setting each day.	Parent/carer feedback, observation	
e. Transition to school for children with additional needs is a smooth, supported process.	Feedback from schools, parents, children	
6. Embolden: As an integral part of their learning, do all children in your setting develop an awareness of values?		
Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. The values-based approach is having a positive impact on children's learning through embedded deep learning.	Learning journeys	
b. There are lots of opportunities for children to give their own responses to show their understanding of values.	Examples	
c. Children are developing a social and	Examples,	

moral awareness as a result of experiences offered in the setting.	case studies	
d. Opportunities for personal and spiritual experiences are offered and valued.	Displays, photos, videos, website	

7. Embolden: Does your values-based approach impact positively on children's lives beyond your setting?

Criteria	Possible Evidence	Comments
a. Parents/carers have been consulted about what they would like the setting to offer through the values-based approach.	Completed questionnaires /verbal responses	
b. The website, newsletters etc support the promotion of values-based social & emotional skills through home activities	Website, newsletters	
c. The setting provides a range of	Evidence of	

opportunities to support parents/carers. This may include family values courses.	family learning activities & family events	
d. Views of relevant stakeholders and contacts with external agencies and visitors inform planning when developing values.	Records of meetings, records of visitors	
e. Parents/carers are positive ambassadors for this values-based approach & helping children at home.	Feedback from families/ other agencies	

We therefore award

Early Years Values-based Education accreditation.

Thank you for welcoming

to your inspirational pre-school today.



Signed:

Date:

Annexe 1: Values-based Education, Embrace, Empower, Embolden

Bridget Knight, CEO Values-based Education, September 2025

What is Values-based Education? Values-based Education is a transformative improvement strategy - heart, mind and soul.

Our Vision: The setting is a microcosm of the world. What is created in our setting today can provide a glimpse of how our world can be tomorrow (unattributed).

What are values and what do they do?



To **value** something is to consider it with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness, or importance so we use values like kindness, respect and hope to see, reason and eventually become. They bring a universal objectivity with them: 'care' means caring for me, for you, for the world... it can apply to everything. When we start noticing values in different places, we start to build a jigsaw in our brain...our brains like having puzzles to solve... then we start to find meaning, and when we start to find meaning, we start to care... this changes our outlook and behaviours. The **vocabulary of values** develops ethical habits and patterns of thinking, speaking and behaving that make for successful learning and living.

Explicitly naming and living by a values-based vision breathes those values into life. In so doing, we transform outlook, attitudes and prospects for every single learner.

Values-based Education is an intentionality. This systemic values-based approach works through 3 essential themes that are supported by 6 concepts.

Embrace

- Ethical leadership
- Modelling

Empower

- Ethical Vocabulary
- Teaching and Learning
- Reflection

Embolden

- Values in to Action

Why does it work?



It reduces the challenges learners face in order to succeed. It's a truism that 'being nice' creates fewer impediments, irons things out, smooths the path, makes problems disappear. Working together through prosocial values results in an enabling culture - which makes people feel safe, and then they can build trust, and then they are able to flourish. Really simple yet really profound, it establishes a great, diverse 'normal'.

Theme 1: Embracement – creation of a values-based culture within the setting for every single person

- Of belonging
- Of emotional safety
- Of unconditional positive regard
- Of prioritising positive relationships, with self, one another and the world
- Of building self-worth.

This theme is supported by the concepts of ETHICAL LEADERSHIP for ETHOS and CULTURE shown in an explicit commitment to the chosen or open values in both policy and practice and of CONSISTENT MODELLING of these values in outlook and behaviours and RELATIONSHIPS.

What does that look like?



- A carefully conceived and strongly stated vision sets the direction of travel.
- The vision is enacted through chosen prosocial values.

For example:

- Vision and values are explicitly stated on the website and in displays, inside and outside.
- Vision and values explicitly frame and guide all policies.
- Individuals feel valued.
- There is visible leadership of values in all adults and learners, inside and outside.

Theme 2: Empowerment – through both taught and caught skills that purposefully develop intellectual,



ethical, spiritual and critical thinking

- Through building and using a shared ethical vocabulary.
- Through exploring values as part of subjects and topics in the curriculum.
- Through teaching and facilitating opportunities to ponder, explore, question and debate.
- Through planned moments to tune into our innate wisdom.

This theme is supported by the concepts of ETHICAL VOCABULARY, TEACHING AND LEARNING and REFLECTION.

What does that look like?

- Quiet areas offered in play rooms.
- Lots of circle time and PSHE activities.
- Bespoke support for children who need additional learning support or emotional assistance.
- Book corners with values-based reading.
- Staff modelling trust and connection.



- Staff using emotionally safe language with one another and with children.
- Staff using values language to help children self-regulate, conflict solve and find resolution.
- Teachers and other staff tuning in to children, offering individual support for welfare and helping them achieve their trajectory.
- Curriculum subjects threaded through with opportunities to learn about values.
- Storytimes centred around the values theme, deepening understanding progressively.
- Group time and times in the day offer moments to engage in reflection

Theme 3: Emboldening– themes 1 and 2 embed so that we live our lives naturally and authentically through



our values. This builds to agency so that our impulse is to use our values to help those around us. When we continue to facilitate this agency, it can surpass all expectations.

Settings build this

- Through sharing understanding of values beyond the setting, working with their local community.
- Through sharing with parents.
- Through initiating charitable or altruistic actions.

This theme is supported by the concepts of VALUES IN TO ACTION.

What does that look like?

- Opportunities for children to take their understanding beyond the setting and engage with community national and international issues. Families might get involved with charitable causes, both raising money and exploring the underlying themes.
- Opportunities for children to take on areas of responsibility, such as becoming friends for others.
- Opportunities for children to practice hospitality for others – hosting tea/coffee mornings to combat loneliness in the local area, for example.



- Opportunities for children and families to take part on a national stage

Impact:

- People see their lives in terms of their values and realise the impact – this helps us to learn emotionally and intellectually and face the challenges that we face in our lives.
- It becomes the way we see ourselves and our lives.
- People act from a values base, sharing their ideas.
- The values approach realises a level of agency in the world that involves self value as well as an ethical stance.