

VbE Early Years Quality Mark

Accreditation: Welcome and Information

*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

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 and learning journeys
- 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/carer 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 for travel. A bursary is available to settings which can show severe financial hardship

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.

How to complete the form

Read the criteria carefully.

In the *comments* box, make brief notes on how you meet the criteria. Evidence should be current or recent.

It is not necessary to keep a portfolio of evidence to show to your early years VbE accreditor. Instead, be ready to show them your environment and activities, as well as enable conversations with staff, children and parents/carers when they visit. To ease workload, keep the collection of evidence 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 your completed accreditation template 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.