



Disability Equality: promoting positive attitudes through the teaching of the national curriculum.

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INFORMATION FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Ignorance, a lack of awareness and a fear of difference can lead to prejudice. The way in which negative, prejudicial attitudes can influence behaviour and lead to discrimination can be seen in the life experiences of disabled children and adults.

Promoting well-informed social attitudes to disability is central to securing the right to equality for all disabled people and the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) introduces the Disability Equality Duty (DED), which includes a requirement to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. Schools can promote positive attitudes and disability equality more widely by being inclusive, and as part of an inclusive approach they can promote positive attitudes through the National Curriculum.

Teaching the National Curriculum carries with it a responsibility to

Promote equal opportunities and enable pupils to challenge discrimination and stereotyping, develop an understanding of where such prejudice comes from, develop pupils' integrity and autonomy and help them to be responsible and caring citizens capable of contributing to the development of a just society. (Ref: www.nc.uk.net/nc-resources/html/valuesaims purposes.shtml)

Promoting Disability Equality in Schools (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) provides detailed guidance to schools on their duties under the DED and explains that schools need to be more proactive, explicit, involved and comprehensive in their promotion of disability equality.

Research Evidence

Research undertaken at The Children's Society mapped current practice across primary and secondary schools, identified examples of practice being taught within the National Curriculum and highlighted what more needed to be done to develop practice. For a copy of the research see: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/research. However, results of this research indicated that a quarter of primary schools surveyed, reported that they did not include any disability equality in the teaching of the National Curriculum. In a survey of young people aged 14 to 16, over half reported that they had not learned about disabled people or people with learning difficulties in the past year. Barriers identified included the low incidence of disabled pupils attending schools, low levels of awareness, knowledge and confidence among teachers, limited time to plan or implement classes, a lack of resources and ideas on how or what to incorporate into subjects across the National Curriculum.

This leaflet highlights guidance to support teaching and draws on what teachers and pupils identified as being useful. It is hoped that this leaflet will help to inform and promote positive teaching of disability equality within schools and promote further discussion of this issue.

Teaching and Learning Resources and Curriculum Ideas

The following illustrates teachers' perspectives of good practice.

WHAT WORKS

- An inclusive ethos within the school
- Staff teams who are knowledgeable, skilled and committed
- Better training, guidance and support for teachers, including Disability Equality training and ongoing INSET for all staff
- High levels of awareness across the whole school community
- Disability equality teaching being part of a wider strategy and included across the curriculum and not just within subjects such as PSHE, Citizenship and Religious education
- A designated member of staff to co-ordinate teaching across the curriculum
- A better understanding of why promoting disability awareness and equality is important
- Links with disabled people within the school community and beyond, as well as links with special schools
- The availability of good resources
- Awareness of, and the challenging of, stereotypes
- A critical approach to the use of 'disablist' language which reinforces discriminatory attitudes and negative stereotypes
- Promotion of the social model of disability¹
- The inclusion of positive and diverse images in all materials used within the school and undertaking an audit of existing materials and resources to ensure they promote positive attitudes

Pupils report that making the teaching feel relevant, spending more time on exploring issues, using contemporary up-to-date resources and involving people who had experience of disability would be a good approach.

Evidence suggests that finding ways to inform as well as stimulate critical reflection and discussion among pupils works best. Schools report that they use school assemblies, circle time, stories, novels, drama and performing arts, games, role-play and specific units of work to develop disability equality. Working with disabled pupils, parents, teachers and others in the local community to raise awareness were also mentioned, as well as online resources such as *missdorothy.com* and videos such as *Talk* produced by the Disability Rights Commission and *That's My Life*, an Arcadian Production for 4Learning in association with the National Children's Bureau.

Subject Based Suggestions

English/Literacy

Children's fiction offers opportunities to promote positive images and attitudes towards disability and challenge negative stereotypes. Reiser and Mason (1992) include a list of recommended publications, and suggests reading and discussing traditional stories that feature disabled characters (e.g. *Rapunsel*, or *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* or Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*

or John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row*) and rewriting or retelling them so that disabled characters are not stereotyped. Some resources exist which give some direction to teachers on using particular stories or novels. Watson (in Reiser and Mason, 1992) provides teachers with notes and ideas on developing a unit of work for GCSE English/English Literature. Leicester (2007) provides stories, and guidance on their use, for teachers working in Key Stages 1 and 2.

Mathematics

Reiser (2006) identifies that the following could be included in maths lessons. For example, an exploration of the mathematics of the Braille system, calculations of the gradients for wheel chair ramps, reviewing scale and measurement in carrying out and drawing a school access survey or studying statistics of disabled people in local, national and international populations.

Science

Subjects areas could include understanding the main causes of impairments in human biology, developing an understanding of different types of impairment and that some form of impairment is the experience of the majority of people during their life course. Other areas could include developing an understanding of genetics, linked to discussion of the moral issues of Eugenics. *The Disability Equality in the Classroom* resources include a unit of work on science and disability that can be used at Key Stage One. <http://www.diseed.org.uk>

History

Teachers could explore the treatment, experiences and activism of disabled people through the ages. For example, the treatment of disabled people by the Greeks and Romans, The Great Witch Hunts of 1480-1680, the Industrial Revolution and the exclusion of disabled people from the workforce and Poor Law Relief, the treatment of disabled people in Nazi Germany and the Civil Rights Movement and the growth of the disability movement (See Reiser, 2006). *Speaking For Ourselves* published by Scope is a teaching pack based on oral histories and provides learning materials across Key Stages 1 – 4. Materials are presented in a number of formats including CD-Rom and DVD. <http://www.speakingforourselves.org.uk/index.php/schools>

Geography

Suggestions include looking at the global distribution of impairments (e.g injuries from land mines, polio, malaria), the lack of resources in some countries to eradicate 80% of impairments that are preventable, or the consequences of pollution in terms of the impairment of populations. Lessons could consider the built environment, undertake access surveys of the school, local environment and shopping centres, study housing, barrier-free design and the urban environment or look at the cost-benefit of making public transport accessible.

Drama

Analysing the portrayal of disabled people in film or TV soaps and dramas has considerable potential. This could be assisted by the Disabling Imagery resource developed by Disability Equality in Education and the British Film Institute. Schools could also involve external theatre companies in performing or facilitating drama workshops. *Graeae* is a disabled-led theatre company that works within schools, *Shape* creates partnerships with schools. Other inclusive drama companies that offer

training and workshops include *Chicken Shed*, *Deafinitely Theatre*, *Heart N Soul*, *Mind the Gap*, *Oily Cart*, *Full Body* and *the Voice* and *No Limits Theatre Company*.

Religious Education

Lessons could explore how religions view disabled people and the impact that this has had on the way in which disabled people are treated, whether religious texts should be taken literally, the place of charity, its changing role, how it has depicted disabled people and how disabled people might view charity, the link between good and physical perfection in many cultures and how to value difference (see Reiser, 2006).

Art and design

Students could study the portrayal (or lack) of disabled artists by artists in different periods. Teachers could draw on contemporary arts projects such as the sculpture of Alison Lapper commissioned for Trafalgar Square in London, or study the work of disabled artists such as Frida Kahlo, Toulouse Lautrec or Van Gogh and the present Disability Arts Movement.

Modern Languages

Students could be encouraged to examine the language used to describe or label disabled people and its derivations. They could research the treatment and rights of disabled people in the countries that use the languages they are studying and present their findings in that language. British Sign Language could be taught as a curriculum subject.

Citizenship/PSHE

Reiser (2006) suggests a range of topics including developing an understanding of what constitutes discrimination towards disabled people, studying examples of discrimination, studying the Disabled People's Civil Rights movement or involving pupils in developing an equal opportunities policy for their school. The Disability Rights Commission have designed lesson plans for use at Key Stages 3 and 4. Disability Equality in Education have developed 'Disabling Imagery?' in collaboration with the British Film Institute, this helps young people develop a more critical approach to the portrayal of disabled people in the media – this can be used across all Key Stages.

Physical Education

Teachers can develop disability awareness and equality by ensuring that PE and sporting activities involve all pupils (See Rieser, 2006).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Students can develop awareness and appreciation of the use that disabled people make of ICT to overcome barriers. Students could devise a computer 'tool' or programme for disabled people or could develop an awareness of the different switching systems used to access ICT such as head pointing, eye pointing, voice activation, touch screen, yes/no switching and augmentative communication aids. Students could research disabled people's issues through internet websites and make a computer representation of these. They could do a computer graphic representation of statistics of the number of disabled people in the population or they could design and produce signage for people with learning difficulties to access a computer function.

Music

Students could study the work of disabled musicians such as Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Evelyn Gleny, Beethoven, or analyse operas that feature disabled characters such as Rigoletto, Traviata and LaBoheme or Porgy and Bess for stereotyping and explore alternative scenarios (See Rieser, 2006).

Guidance and useful materials

Booth and Ainscow, (2000) CSIE Index for Inclusion Index for Inclusion, Bristol, Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education.

<http://www.csie.org.uk>

British Film Institute and Disability Equality in Education (no date) *Disabling imagery? – A Teaching Guide to Disability and Moving Image Media*.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/disability/>

Department for Education and Skills (2001) Inclusive Schools. London. Department for Education and Skills.

Department for Education and Skills (2006) Promoting Disability Equality in Schools. London. Department for Education and Skills.

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/disabilityandthedda/guidancedisabilityequalityinschools/>

Disability Rights Commission (2006) Schools and the Disability Equality Duty in England and Wales. Guidance for Governors, Head Teachers, Teaching and Support Staff Working in England and Wales. London. Disability Rights Commission.

Leicester, M. (2007) Special Stories for Disability Awareness. Stories and Activities for Teachers, Parents and Professionals. London. Jessica Kingsley Publications.

<http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/>

Quicke, J.C (1985) Disability in Modern Children’s Fiction. London. Croon Helm.

Rieser, R. and Peasley, H. (2002) Disability Equality in Education. Inclusion in Schools Course Book. London. Disability Equality in Education. <http://www.diseed.org.uk>

Reiser, R (2006) Making it Happen: Implementing the Duty to Promote Disability Equality in Secondary Schools and Local Authorities. London. Disability Equality in Education. <http://www.diseed.org.uk>

Reiser, R. and Mason, M. (1992) Disability Equality in the Classroom: A Human Rights Issue. London. Disability Equality in Education. <http://www.diseed.org.uk>

Scope (no date) *Speaking for Ourselves Teaching Pack*.

<http://www.speakingforourselves.org.uk/index.php/schools>

ⁱ The Social Model of Disability argues that it is society that ‘disables’ people with impairments. People with impairments are excluded from participating by barriers and discriminatory attitudes, behaviours and practices. For a fuller explanation of the Social Model of Disability and how it relates to disability equality see the full research report: www.childrengsociety.org.uk/research.