Introduction to Disability Awareness

This section looks at the issue of Inclusion. In a nutshell this means that students need to be able to accept difference, others may have different needs and abilities but are part of the school community and can play a full role in that community.

The section looks at this issue from the focus of students who have a disability or a Statement of Educational Need (SEN).

The emphasis of the section is to help students acquire knowledge, be able to communicate with others more effectively and look at what they as a group can do to make their class, year or school a more welcoming environment for all students.
Background

Young People with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities are increasingly being educated in mainstream schools. This includes a number of young people who were formerly educated in Special Schools, resulting in young people moving schools and the closure of some special schools. This process is termed “Inclusion”.

This means that a growing number of pupils will be working closely with disabled young people. It is important therefore that they have some awareness of the issues.

By inclusion we mean not only that pupils with SEN should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but that they should also join fully with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school.

SEN Green Paper, Excellence for All 1997

The following exercises will help pupils to:

- Learn more about the experiences and needs of pupils with disability
- Be able to understand the discrimination felt by some pupils in schools
- Reflect on the situation in their own school

Active Citizenship – Making a Resource Pack about Disability and Inclusion

- Pupils in four York schools both from mainstream and special schools worked through drama to highlight their experiences of school and Inclusion. This work culminated in a drama performance.
- These experiences as expressed through drama were highlighted on video and in a written learning resource.
- The young people were part of the team, which created the resource. They:
  - Interviewed other young people
  - Edited the video footage
  - Piloted the resource in schools

Facts about Pupils with SEN

One in five children – a total of 1.9 million – in England and Wales are considered by their schools to have special educational needs SEN’

Audit Commission

Local authorities in England and Wales spent £3.6 billion on SEN provision in 2001/02, representing 15 per cent of spending on schools (or the ‘local schools budget’).

Most SEN resources – 69 per cent – are focused on the small of minority children with statements.
Exercises

Below is a list of exercises that can be undertaken with students.

What is Inclusion?
To find out what students think the term Inclusion means to them and help them frame the concept.

Labelling
Highlights the damaging effects on others that labelling causes. To be used with handout A. The last sheet gives advice to students on which alternative words do not cause offence.

Looking at Terms “Special Needs” and “Disability”
Gain a better understanding of what actually constitutes special needs and disabilities. Develop an awareness of the implications of having special needs/disability upon the individual. Make links between their own experiences, feelings and needs, and those of young people with special needs and disabilities. To be used with Handout A & B.

Experiences and feelings of students with SEN
Investigates some problems faced by students with SEN and who they can turn to for help.

What can you do?
Allows students an opportunity to reflect on the work done and how they can make a difference to other peoples lives in their own community.
What is Inclusion?

Whole class discussion
Materials – none
Time – 5 minutes

Exercise

As a whole class discussion ask:

• What pupils understand by the term ‘Inclusion’

Prompts to use:

• The word comes from Include.

• Other pupils have said:
  
  • ‘Everyone having the same chances and opportunities’
  • ‘Including everyone in something’
  • ‘Being seen as normal’
  • ‘Treating people equally’
  • ‘Involving people who are often left out’

*By inclusion we mean not only that pupils with SEN should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but that they should also join fully with their peers in the curriculum and life of the school.*

*SEN Green Paper, Excellence for All 1997*

Discussion Points:

Young People with disabilities and special needs are increasingly being educated in their local schools.

• What used to happen is that a number of young people would go to Special Schools
• But now many of these are closing and young people are moving to local schools.
• Inclusion means all pupils can join fully in the curriculum and life of the school.
• Pupils aren’t left out of things because they have a special need or disability but school life is organised so that everyone can contribute as much as they are able.
What can I say? – Labelling

Materials – pens and photocopied sheets from this pack.
Time – 20 minutes

Introduction

We have all been in situations when we have felt embarrassed because we have not known the right words to use.

Labels can be useful and important. They can help us to understand qualities, strengths and needs.

On the other hand, labels can be damaging and inaccurate. They can stop us from knowing and understanding a person as an individual.

Labels used to describe people with special needs and disabilities can also often be deliberately hurtful, and can be used to intentionally upset and offend people.

What some young people have said:

- ‘It’s like walking down the street with a label on your head saying disabled or something like that’
- ‘People call me mongy’

Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group handout A, and ask the groups to decide whether the terms listed are:

a) Positive terms (i.e. actively challenge stereotypes surrounding people with SEN or disability)
b) Neutral terms (i.e. purely descriptive and inoffensive)
c) Negative terms (insulting and hurtful)

Give the groups 5 minutes to complete the exercise – bring the whole group back together to discuss their answers and the issues surrounding the use of labels.

Discussion points:

1. How would it feel to be called any by any of the negative labels?
2. Why is it important to use neutral/positive terminology?
3. Do we even need to use labels at all?

NB It is also important to say that different terms can offend people from different races or cultures. Use of offensive words is a form of bullying and can cause lasting hurt.

Give out Handouts B & C, which give guidance on positive and negative terms.
Labelling exercise – Are terms Neutral, Positive or Negative?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spastic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongol/mongy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down Syndrome</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Disabled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blind</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually impaired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mute</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf and Dumb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hearing Impaired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Handicapped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair-bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crippled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Handout B

**Labelling exercise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term used for when a person may need some extra support for a short time or all the time</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spastic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spastic is a medical term but it can be used in a very insulting manner.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mongol/mongy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Down Syndrome</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down syndrome medical and correct term for a genetic condition. Former term Mongol now regarded as offensive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disabled people</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Disabled</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The disabled</em> Avoid - Use the term ‘disabled people’.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The blind</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The blind</em> This puts everyone together as though they have no individuality. Use ‘people with visual impairments’, or ‘blind people’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visually impaired</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mute</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implies people can’t communicate! There are many ways people can communicate without speaking - sign language, computers, voice machines.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaf and Dumb</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many deaf people use sign language to communicate and dumb implies that someone is stupid. Say ‘a person with a hearing impairment’, or ‘a deaf person’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Impaired</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handicapped</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of begging and disabled people being cap in hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wheelchair-bound</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are not tied to their wheelchairs. Some people use them all the time others can move around for short distances or periods of time. Say ‘wheelchair users’ or ‘someone who uses a wheelchair’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crippled</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cripple</em> or <em>crippled by</em> say ‘…… has difficulty walking’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout C
Labelling - What Can I Say?

The exercise raises awareness about ‘labels’. A lot of people can be confused about what they say without causing offence. They don’t intentionally mean to be horrid but they just don’t know what to say.

There are some specific terms explain above but there are too many to explain each term that might be used.

Avoid

- ‘Afflicted with’
- ‘Victim of’
- ‘Suffering from’

These say disability is an illness or a personal burden. Increasingly, disabled people view their disability as a positive rather than negative experience.

Avoid:

- Able bodied

The preferred term is ‘non-disabled’. ‘Able-bodied’ suggests that all disabilities are physical and ignores unseen disabilities, and that disabled people are not able. It’s fine to use common everyday phrases.

- People who use wheelchairs do ‘go for a walk’.
- People with a visual impairment may say ‘see you later’.
- People with hearing impairments are unlikely to take offence at ‘Did you hear about...”

In general:

- Treat others how you would like to be treated!
- Don’t use terms as a means of insult.
- Don’t just concentrate on a disability – it is only one element of a person.
- But don’t totally ignore the fact that a person has a disability.
- If unsure ask or say that you are unsure.
What do we mean by the terms ‘disabled’ and ‘special needs’?

Materials – flip chart/board, felt tips
Time – 10 minutes

Exercise

The following exercise will help young people to:

1. Gain a better understanding of what actually constitutes special needs and disabilities.
2. Develop an awareness of the implications of having special needs/disability upon the individual.
3. Make links between their own experiences, feelings and needs, and those of young people with special needs and disabilities.

This is a whole class exercise.

Ask one or two members of the class to ‘chart’ onto the board or flip chart. Ask the class to draw up a list of terms or short statements describing:

A the physical/behavioural characteristics that could be associated with special needs/disabilities. (5 minutes)

Then

B the implications (i.e.; emotions, feelings) that could be associated with having a disability/special need. (5 minutes)

Overleaf there are lists already completed by groups of young people.

Discussion – Points to draw out

• Which terms in section A are inappropriate/inaccurate – (remember the section on labelling).
• Ask pupils to consider situations in their own school careers when they have experienced some of the feelings and emotions they have associated with special needs and disabilities as set out in section B
• Emphasise that Special Needs is not just about physical disability but can be about the emotional needs of a pupil. It can be about people needing to use medication.
• Emphasise that many pupils may have special educational needs for only part of their school career – they may be ‘going through a bad patch’
These physical/behavioural characteristics could be associated with special needs/disabilities.
The emotions and feelings could be associated with having a disability/special need.

- Different
- Bullied
- Individual
- Scared
- Struggle
- Small
- Sounds nasty
- Not obvious
- Outcast
- Not accepted
- Lonely
- Bottom of the list
- Upsetting
Experiences and Feelings of Pupils with SEN

Materials – flip chart and felt tips for each group
Time – 20 minutes

Exercise:

The following pages contain ‘case studies’ from four young people – pieces of writing by young people with special needs or disabilities, and who are currently in ‘special’ schools.

Divide the class into groups of 5/6 pupils. Give each group a case study. It is suggested that all groups work on one case study. The others can be used for further work.

Each group needs to choose someone to write on the flip chart and someone who can tell the rest of the class about their subject. They need to note on the paper provided:

A  The problems faced by the young person
B  How these problems made the young person feel
C  What could have been done to help the young person?
D  Who could have helped?

Give the class 10 minutes to complete this task then bring them back as a whole group and ask for feedback

Points to draw out

- Is it always easy to find someone in school who can help
- People mess about but for some people ‘messing about’ is a symptom of a special need?
Sarah

When I started a big high school for the first time it was strange. I was nervous. I got on with my friends though. My tutor was really frightening, she used to shout. You couldn’t tell where you were with her except she always shouted. Apart from her I felt really cool when I was at high school. In fact it was great.

On our first day our class got a detention over one person. My friends made me very welcome. When they found out I was in special needs two boys were nasty to me and my best friend was getting the same thing. The next day they were nice to us. I think they felt guilty. We became friends.

I was in special needs for three classes – English, Maths and RE. We moved house and I had to move school. I wish we could have stayed. I like my new school but …

Frankie

My first school was good. I liked it there. My friends were there. I got on with my work and kept out of trouble. My junior school was all right as well. I was with the same people. The teachers were good. One teacher bossed me about, but he was funny and I didn’t take much notice. I liked him.

Then we moved and I had to change school. I hadn’t got any friends there. It was different. I stopped going to school for the rest of the year.

When I went to secondary school. I went for a week and stopped going. I was out of school for a long time.

I didn’t like school all that much.
What can you do?

Materials - softball or beanbag
Time 5 minutes

It is everyone’s responsibility to make schools inclusive for all pupils.

Form the class into a circle.

Using the soft ball or bean bag pass it around whoever catches it ask them to say one thing which they can do to help. They then pass onto the next person and so on.

If pupils need prompts ask them to consider the following:

What happens:

- In the playground?
- In the classroom?
- At lunchtime?
- Other pupils’ attitudes?
- Staff attitudes?
- After school?
- Bullying and Behaviour?

As an alternative

The group as a whole can draw up a suggestion of how they think their school can support all pupils.

This can be taken to the School Council for adoption by the school as a whole.

Opportunities for disabled people

Disabled young people generally have fewer chances than non-disabled young people. What causes this?

There are different ways to explain:

- An individual (or medical) model of disability
- A social model of disability

The individual model of disability says that it all comes down to an individual's body. They must fit into the way the society, school or organisation works.