



# Tackling disablist language based bullying in school: A Teacher's Guide

## SEN and disability: developing effective anti-bullying practice

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**SEN and disabilities: developing effective anti-bullying practice:** A programme of work, led by the Anti-Bullying Alliance and funded by the Department for Education, to reduce the incidence and impact of bullying of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities in schools.

## Contents

This resource addresses:

- name calling and derogatory language which is disablist,
- examines disablism, its origins and how this is represented in the language,
- and discusses successful strategies, useful activities, case studies and resources.

The resource covers the following topics:

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## 1. Introduction:

### What is bullying?

It is important that when thinking about disablist language we have a full understanding of the definition of bullying. The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) defines bullying as:

**“the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace.”**

### Are disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN) more likely to experience bullying in school?

Studies show that young people who are disabled and/or have special educational needs are more likely to be bullied than others. Research from 2014 has indicated that disabled primary school pupils are twice as likely as other pupils to suffer from persistent bullying. Reports suggest that bullying may have been experienced by:

- Roughly 8 out of 10 young people with learning difficulties
- 82% of young people who are disfluent (those with a stammer), 91% of these by namecalling
- 39% of children with speech and language difficulties
- Over 90% of parents of children with Asperger Syndrome reported that their child had been bullied in the previous 12 months alone
- At age 7, 12% of children with special needs and 11% of those with a statement said they were bullied 'all of the time' by other pupils, compared to just 6% of their non-disabled peers
- 61.5 % of those with mental health problems reported being bullied, with 62.5 per cent of bullied participants reporting that being bullied was an important reason for their attendance at the CAMH service<sup>1</sup>

The Council for Disabled Children carried out a survey of 80 disabled children and young people in 2010<sup>2</sup>. The most common form of bullying experienced was verbal (36%), followed by emotional (30%) and physical (28%). 'Verbal abuse. In addition to comments directly targeted at disabled children related to their impairment. This also encompassed the general use of derogatory language about disability, which was commonly used by other children and often went unchallenged'.

**Verbal abuse as a form of disablist bullying is widespread and has been shown to have a cumulative negative impact on self-esteem and achievement. Countering it requires a consistent wholeschool approach involving staff and pupils, to tackling disablist language in assemblies, across the curriculum, in the playground, around school, in class and tutor time, in circle time, PHSE or quality time and all staff need to be equipped to always challenge and explain why such language is unacceptable. It should always be recorded on a school anti-bullying register and followed up.**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/research/key-statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/2260/SEND\\_bullying\\_CDC\\_Briefing\\_final.pdf](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/2260/SEND_bullying_CDC_Briefing_final.pdf)

## 2. How prevalent is disablist language in schools?

ABA has conducted qualitative research over recent years with young disabled people about their experiences of bullying at school. Time and time again the issue of the use of disablist language was talked about. Young people told us:

- disablist language is used in schools by other pupils regularly (and worryingly sometimes by teaching staff); and,
- that it was very rarely challenged by teaching staff.

ABA wanted to conduct some quantitative research for Anti-Bullying Week 2014. We completed an independent poll of 1,000 adults and found that:

- 1 in 10 adults have used abusive language towards a disabled person
- 44% of adults use the words 'spaz', 'spastic', 'retard', or 'mong' in casual conversation
- Half of those justify the use of this discriminatory language as part of 'banter'
- 65% hear others using these words in conversation
- Most adults are ignorant of the meaning of disablist words

We wanted to see what teachers thought about the prevalence of disablist language amongst pupils. We polled 500 teachers and found that:

- Almost 70% of teachers have heard children using the words 'spaz', 'spastic', 'retard' or 'mong' at school.
- Over half of these teachers heard children using it in 'casual' conversation; however the same number heard them using the words as an insult to their peers.
- 55% of teachers have heard children using the words at a disabled child /child with special educational needs - with just under half of these using the words to insult them

Our findings have painted a very worrying picture about the use of this discriminatory language. We cannot expect children and young people not to use disablist language if adults are using this language as regularly as our poll indicates.

Central to tackling the use of disablist language in schools is:

- confident staff, who understand the history of disablist bullying and harassment, the social model of disability
- staff who are prepared to challenge disablist language, thinking and behaviour
- a pupil body that increasingly takes ownership of this and becomes self-monitoring.

**'Sticks and stones may break my bones and words leave emotional scars that never heal'** - quote from a young disabled person



**"It makes you feel angry, sad, not confident."** Quote from a young disabled person talking about disablist language

**"This is completely unacceptable. No child should ever say or hear these words whether used in conversation or as an insult. Schools have a responsibility to ensure that children can learn in an environment free from prejudice."**

Minister for Children and Families, Edward Timpson MP, during Anti-Bullying Week 2014

### 3. What is disablism?

Disablism is a relatively new word and teachers and educationalists may be more familiar with the need to challenge sexism, racism and homophobia. SCOPE, the UK Charity for people with cerebral palsy, in conjunction with the Disabled People's Movement, proposed as part of their Time to Get Equal Campaign (2007) the following definition:

**“discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others”<sup>1</sup>**

**The Oxford Dictionary defines disablism as ‘discrimination or prejudice against people who are disabled’.**

This largely mirrored the widespread discrimination both direct, institutional and indirect that impacted on all aspects of disabled people's lives in a report commissioned by the UK Disabled People's Movement, the publication of which, in 1991, eventually led to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) outlawing discrimination against disabled people<sup>3</sup>. However, in 2004, a report from the think tank Demos saw disablism as the ‘overarching oppression that still blighted the lives of so many disabled people’ and presented the need for this thrust for equality<sup>4</sup>. In 2001 education came under the 1995 Act and it was consolidated and broadened in the 2010 Equalities Act.

**Bullying of disabled children and young people is a major problem.** Young disabled people are reporting that the use of disablist language is widespread in schools and colleges and is rarely challenged. These comments have a negative impact on young disabled people's self-esteem, and also serve to isolate and ‘other’ disabled young people, allowing perpetrators of harassment to minimise their concern over the impact of their bullying.

**Challenging disablist language can present some issues.** Attempts to challenge disablism can backfire, if not rooted in a clear understanding of the damaging effects. In 1981, the last year of his life, Joey Deacon was featured on the children's magazine programme *Blue Peter* for the ‘International Year of the Disabled’. He was presented as an example of a man who achieved a lot in spite of his disabilities. Despite the sensitive way in which *Blue Peter* covered his life, the impact was not as intended. The sights and sounds of Deacon's distinctive speech and movements had a lasting impact on young viewers, who quickly learned to imitate them. His name and mannerisms quickly became a label of ridicule in school playgrounds across the country - ‘Joey’.<sup>5</sup>

If the culture in the school is not consistently developed into respecting difference, then actions such as sending pupils who misbehave to a time out-room or running separate classes for those with learning difficulties, can hatch disablist insults e.g. saying the target person belongs to that group.

The language used to describe physical and mental difference in the UK draws on many outdated and often barbaric notions, which arise from the history of attitudes to disabled people. Much of the language used to describe disabled people and their impairing conditions are like fossils in some long forgotten geological strata. The original meaning and social contexts are long forgotten, but the negative attitudes conveyed remain and can be harmful to the self-esteem of those targeted.

<sup>3</sup> Barnes, Colin (1991) Disabled People in Britain and discrimination: A case for anti-discrimination legislation. <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/library/author/barnes.colin>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/disablism.pdf> ‘Disablism :How to tackle the last prejudice’ 2004

<sup>5</sup> Rose, Damon (12 April 2006). “UK | Magazine | The s-word”. BBC News. Retrieved 2011-10-22. Watch the original interview <https://youtube.com/user/imjoeydeakon?feature=watch>

## 4. The Social Model vs the Medical Model

Disablist language also draws on a commonly held idea of 'normal', in that anyone perceived through their **behaviour, physical or mental characteristics or thinking** to be different from the majority can be singled out by those seeking to exercise their power over others. The history of what is accepted as 'normal' varies over time. The pressure to conform on children and young people through the media, advertising and life style reinforces old fashioned views. The history of attitudes to disabled people is covered elsewhere<sup>6</sup>, but the ways disability has been thought about are important to understand for schools and teachers, to ensure they operate from, what is known as, **social model approach**.

Thinking about disability has moved through a variety of traditional approaches based on myth and superstition, to a medical approach focussing on the impairment and loss of function to a social approach, looking at the barriers beyond the person that disable.

### The 'medical model'

With the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century came a more scientific understanding of the causes of impairment and with it, a sense of confidence in medical science's ability to 'cure', or at least rehabilitate, disabled people. Often for social or political reasons some were deemed incurable and placed in long-stay institutions and special schools. A notion of 'normality' was invested with great pseudo-scientific significance. It was based on assessments of impairments from a deficit point of view against normality: **what one cannot do, instead of what one can do**.

This has been called 'medical model' (or 'individual model') thinking by the Disabled People's Movement over the last 45 years. Medical science has a necessary role in keeping many disabled people alive and reducing pain and discomfort, but no one should be reduced to just their impairments.

The 'medical model':

- sees disabled people as the problem
- the impairment is the focus, rather than the needs of the person
- power to change disabled people seems to lie with the medical and associated professions, with their talk of cures, normalisation and science
- disabled people's lives are handed over to these professionals
- their decisions affect where they go to school; what support they get; where they live; what benefits they are entitled to; whether they can work; and even at times, whether they are born at all, or allowed to have children themselves

### Medical model thinking

1. Child is faulty
2. Diagnosis
3. Labelling
4. Impairment becomes focus of attention
5. Assessment, monitoring, programmes of therapy imposed
6. Segregation and alternative services
7. Ordinary needs put on hold
8. Re-entry if normal enough OR permanent exclusion
9. Society remains unchanged

Powerful and pervasive views are reinforced in the media, books, films, comics, art and language. Some disabled people internalise negative views of themselves and develop feelings of low self-

<sup>6</sup> <http://ukdhm.org/v2/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Challenging-Bullying-and-harassment-of-disabled-people-FINAL.pdf>  
<http://ukdhm.org/2012-broadsheet/>  
<http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/wetransfer-dacfa2.zip> Chapter 2

esteem and underachievement, which reinforce non-disabled people's assessments of their worth. The medical model, plus the built environment and social attitudes it creates, lead to a cycle of dependency and exclusion which is difficult to break.

Increasingly, today, **the medical model is being rejected**. Many people feel strongly that treating disabled people as needing to be adapted to existing circumstances or, if this is not possible, caring for them in specialised institutions, is wrong.

## The 'social model'

**The social model of disability says that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people.**

In the last 45 years, the Disabled Peoples' Movement has advocated a different way of looking at disability, which they call the 'social model'. This starts from the standpoint of all disabled adults' and children's right to belong to and be valued in their local community. You start by looking at the strengths of the person with the impairment and at the physical and social barriers that obstruct them, whether at school, college, home or work. The 'social model' defines 'impairment' and 'disability' as very different things:

- **"Impairment** is the loss or limitation of physical, mental or sensory function on a long-term or permanent basis."
- **"Disablement** is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers" Disabled People's International 1981

**"I'm disabled by the world around me and if the world was more accessible, I would be less disabled and then I would just be left with my 'impairment' i.e. what doesn't work."**

Mik Scarlet (Broadcaster and journalist) speaking for a video about the Social Model for Scope

Impairment and chronic illness exist and sometimes pose real difficulties. Supporters of the disability movement believe that the discrimination against disabled people is socially created and has little to do with their impairments, and that, regardless of the type or severity of their impairments; disabled people are subjected to a **common oppression** by the non-disabled world. Disabled people are often made to feel it's their own fault that they are different. If some part, or parts, of your body or mind are limited in their functioning, this is simply an **impairment**. It doesn't make you any less human. Most people have not been brought up to accept all people as they are. Through fear, ignorance and prejudice, barriers and discrimination develop which disable some people. These are reinforced by negative language and images in the media. Understanding this process allows disabled people to feel good about themselves and empowers them to fight for their human rights.

The 'social model' approach suggests disabled people's disadvantage is due to a complex form of institutional discrimination, as fundamental to society as sexism, racism or homophobia. The disability movement believes the

### Social model thinking

1. Child is valued
2. Strengths and needs defined by self and others
3. Identify barriers and develop solutions
4. Outcome based programme designed
5. Resources are made available to Ordinary services
6. Training for parents and professionals
7. Relationships nurtured
8. Diversity welcomed, child is Included
9. Society evolves

'cure' to the problem of disability lies in changing society. Unlike medically-based cures, this is an achievable goal and benefits everyone.

School example 1

**Situation:** Jamie is being bullied in his French class by a group of children. They are directing disablist language towards him and throwing things at him on a regular basis

**Medical model solution:** The school moves Jamie to another class where the children who were bullying him no longer have contact with him.

**Social model solution:** The school spends time with Jamie and discusses possible courses of action. They set up some restorative meetings with the young people involved so they understand better the impact of their actions.

**Why is the social model a better solution?** Under the medical model solution in this example Jamie is the person who has to change – not the children bullying him. Under the social model solution Jamie leads the decisions made about the situation and the pupils who are bullying Jamie understand why their actions are wrong.

A young person we spoke to in a recent consultation said: *“They finally did something. They removed me from my tutor group. I was taken out of the class and put into a new one. It was me that had to change, not them.”* – this kind of action, whilst done with the best of intentions, sends the wrong message to all involved.



School example 2

**Situation:** Shanice is a type one diabetic and has to administer insulin three times a day and check her blood sugar on a regular basis.

**Medical model solution:** Shanice disappears from class numerous times a day to check her blood sugar and to administer her insulin. Pupils who ask where she is going are told to not talk about it so they don't upset Shanice.

**Social model solution:** Shanice decides she is happy to share information with other pupils about her medical condition. She sits down with her class and her teacher and explains what she has to do and how she regulates her blood sugar. The pupils ask questions about it and she doesn't feel she needs to hide her condition anymore.

**Why is the social model a better solution?** Under the social model in this example Shanice is given the chance to talk openly about her medical condition with the pupils. As the pupils understand Shanice's condition they are less likely to see her as 'different' and therefore she is less likely to experience bullying.





## The shift in thinking of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Recently the United Nations adopted a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)<sup>7</sup>. The Convention embraces a human rights/social model approach: "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."



The Convention follows decades of work by the United Nations to change attitudes and approaches. It takes to a new level the change from viewing persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

The Convention is intended as a human right's instrument with an explicit, social development dimension. It adopts a broad categorisation of disabled people and reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies and qualifies how all categories of rights apply and identifies areas where adaptations have to be made for persons with disabilities to effectively exercise their rights, areas where their rights have been violated, and where protection of rights must be reinforced.<sup>8</sup>

Today Disabled People use the term 'impairment' to talk about their medical condition or diagnosis or description of their functioning and 'disability' describes the social impact of impairment. Understanding the critical difference between these two terms allows us to talk separately and clearly about:

- a named individual = the **person**
- impairment = their **functioning**
- a disability = society's **barriers they experience**

<sup>7</sup>Adopted 2006 and came into force in 2008. Today more than 150 countries worldwide have ratified the convention. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention>

<sup>8</sup> UN DESA <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

## 5. What is the impact of disablist language based bullying?

The overarching message from young people in research carried out by the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) was that the use of disablist language is common, directed towards individuals and as part of day to day language. Young people said phrases such as 'that's so retarded' were common. The use of disablist language is often not challenged. There was a lack of understanding about what disablist language is/ not as clearly understood as racist/homophobic language. Hearing this language has a significant impact on young people's self esteem and identity as a disabled person. It can lead them to feel isolated or to isolate themselves<sup>9</sup>.

Focus groups of Year 6 pupils in research by Leeds University<sup>10</sup> in selected schools around the country, suggested the

predominant view of disabled people was that they stayed at home and did very little. Such negative stereotypes need challenging by making children and students aware of the great diversity of achievement by disabled people.

"Verbal abuse in addition to comments directly targeted at disabled children related to their impairment also encompassed the general use of derogatory language about disability, which was commonly used by other children and often went unchallenged".

For many disabled children and young people, repeated bullying which had not been responded to effectively had led to them developing a very negative self-identity, related to their impairment. Some children reported that due to being disabled, they had been told by staff, that they should "learn to live" with bullying. As a result, many disabled children and young people, had developed very individualised and internalised responses to bullying. They felt that they should remove themselves from, or completely avoid some situations, adapting their own behaviour and use of space, rather than seeing preventing bullying as everyone's responsibility.

An online survey with 80 parents<sup>11</sup> and carers of disabled young people identified that verbal bullying was most common. 85% of respondents believed the bullying was because their children were disabled. Most common was verbal bullying (36%), followed by emotional (30%) and physical (28%). Although nearly all had reported it to the school, 65% felt the response was inadequate. They pointed to the long lasting impact on their child and family, with loss of self esteem and having to move school being the two most common responses.

**"So when people do say things about them, it puts doubts in their mind about who they are and makes them feel inferior, as it were. Instead of feeling different in a positive way, it makes them think they are different in a negative way".**

Young disabled person



**"I think that hearing that (disablist language) and it not being challenged can have a really derogatory effect on the disabled child or young person over a long period of time because it can really affect your self-esteem and self-confidence and you might think over time it's acceptable for people to use that language."**

Young disabled person

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/2260/SEND\\_bullying\\_CDC\\_Briefing\\_final.pdf](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/2260/SEND_bullying_CDC_Briefing_final.pdf)

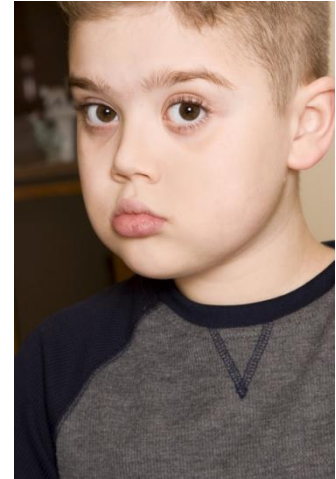
<sup>10</sup> <http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/deeps/deeps-working-paper-one.ppt>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.cafamily.org.uk/media/395239/reports\\_and\\_research\\_bullying\\_of\\_children\\_with\\_disabilities\\_2011\\_parents\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.cafamily.org.uk/media/395239/reports_and_research_bullying_of_children_with_disabilities_2011_parents_briefing.pdf)

A recent long term study by King's College of people at 50 who had been bullied in childhood found that: those who were bullied in childhood were more likely to have poorer physical and mental health and cognitive functioning at 50. Those who were bullied frequently were more likely to be depressed.<sup>12</sup> The study said "the harmful effect of bullying remained even when other factors including childhood IQ, emotional and behavioural problems and parents' socioeconomic status were taken into account".

The impact of disablist language based bullying will often slip beneath the radar in schools as the focus on more dramatic signs of physical or emotional bullying. The research quoted above should be sounding alarm bells to all teachers. We know bullying leads to:

- low self esteem;
- self harm;
- poor mental health; and
- lower academic and economic achievement.



These factors will all impact more on disabled children and young people, faced with the impacts of disability discrimination and oppression in general, higher rates of bullying and low levels of acceptance that the bullying is even taking place.

This is underlined by a survey of teachers in the Equality and Human Rights Committee Triennial Equality Review<sup>1</sup> of 1700 teachers in 1200 schools. Viewed against data for secondary schools of disablist bullying, the discrepancy highlighted is very important:

Young people with a disability or SEN were most at risk of being bullied

- More than four-fifths of young people with a statement of SEN (83%) or a disability that affected their schooling (81%) reported having been bullied in 2004-06, compared to under two-thirds (65%) of young people with no SEN or no disability.
- However, survey evidence from teachers suggests while a quarter of secondary school teachers (and 17% of all teachers) recognise that pupils with disabilities are bullied by other pupils, overall, teachers feel that students with SEN are the most supported group in school.

**The above findings underline why all teachers and schools now need to take a planned wholeschool approach to challenging disablist bullying and language based forms which are often the starting point of devaluation. In the subsequent sections we suggest a range of strategies and activities to help develop this important initiative.**

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-27063715>

## 6. What the Law says

Several laws apply to schools' duties with regard to bullying and challenging disability discrimination<sup>13</sup>. The ABA guidance on various aspects of the law is useful and you can read the Department for Education Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance.<sup>14</sup>

### The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. **The Independent School Standards Regulations 2010** provide that the proprietor of an Academy or other independent school is required to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented.



### Under the Children Act 1989

A bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to their local authority children's social care.

### Criminal Law

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to remember that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003. This may involve the Police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender. This could apply particularly to cyberbullying against disabled children or young people.



### The Equality Act 2010

The most relevant legislation is The Equality Act 2010 which replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act.

The definition of disability under the Equality Act:

**“a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.**

Guidance says that when considering the definition of disability:

- disregard aids, medication and treatment; that physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing and severe disfigurement;

<sup>13</sup> Bullying and the Law <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/7468/bullying-and-the-law-may-14.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/288444/preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_march14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/288444/preventing_and_tackling_bullying_march14.pdf)

- long term means that the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months or for the rest of the affected person's life
- substantial means more than minor or trivial.

A key provision is a **Public Sector Equality Duty**. This duty covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion – and places a duty on **all publicly funded schools and colleges (s149)** to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

**This Equality Duty applies to all decisions taken by the Governing Body or Proprietor of all publicly funded schools. Under this duty schools should discuss and gather information to ensure the decision they take will not increase disablist name calling and bullying.**

There is also a duty towards disabled pupils and students to provide **reasonable adjustments** for them, including auxiliary aids (s20). The object of the duty is to avoid as far as possible by reasonable means, the disadvantage which a disabled pupil experiences because of their disability.<sup>15</sup> This is an anticipatory duty - acted upon before a particular disabled pupil attends school or is involved in an incident.

As name calling bullying is the most frequent occurrence of disablist bullying and has been shown to disproportionately involve and impact on disabled children and students; then minimising it is an important reasonable adjustment. It does have an adverse impact on pupils' well being and achievement. Therefore, **ensuring steps are taken to tackle disablist behaviour and name calling would come under this duty. Creating a positive class environment by discussion with peers about the impacts of disablist name calling and teasing/ridiculing would be a reasonable adjustment.** Creating a system of peer support and mentoring where such language and behaviour is challenged would be another. Recording all such incidents and positively dealing with them would also be a reasonable adjustment. Making such adjustments would also ensure that the schools public sector duty to eliminate harassment is being met.

A whole school consensus on how such incidents are dealt-with is important, including midday supervisors, who should be included in any training that the school undertakes. Staff using their power to belittle or to hold up to ridicule any pupil is always unacceptable. **Doing this to a child who is 'disabled' is likely to be unlawful.** This includes disparaging remarks about a disabled child's work e.g. handwriting when they may have an impairment which impacts on fine motor control, or is messy, when they have a specific learning difficulty, or finding someone with general or specific learning difficulties reading aloud amusing. If the language or comment used by a member of staff about or to a disabled pupil draws in a negative way on their impairment should be challenged by senior staff.

Under the Equality Act there are also a range of different forms of discrimination towards individual disabled people that are unlawful.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/education-providers/schools-guidance/key-concepts/reasonable-adjustments>

- i. **Direct Discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of their 'disability'(S13)
- ii. **Indirect Discrimination:** where a provision, criteria or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage and it cannot be shown as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (s19)
- iii. **Discrimination arising from disability** (s15)
- iv. **Harassment:** when a person (A) engages in unwanted conduct towards (B) because they are disabled and that conduct has the purpose or effect of violating B's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for B (s26).

All four of these, especially **iv**, could be claimed when persistent bullying of disabled pupils by name calling, ridicule or malicious teasing involving disablist language takes place to the detriment of the pupil.

The UK is a signatory of the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' Article 8(26) requires the Government to adopt immediate and effective means of **"b) Fostering at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities"**<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=268>

## 7. Guidelines on respectful language<sup>17</sup>

In this section we discuss the specific language associated with disability, what's appropriate and the history of this language. All teaching staff should understand this guidance and be able to explain to children the history of disablist terms and appropriate language.



- Avoid using medical labels as this may promote a view of disabled people as patients. It also implies the medical label is the over-riding characteristic, which is inappropriate.
- If it is necessary to refer to a condition, it is better to say, for example, 'a person with epilepsy' not an epileptic, or 's/he has cerebral palsy' not a spastic or Down's.
- The word disabled should not be used as a collective noun (for example as in 'the disabled').
- Although disabled people have impairments, they are not people with disabilities. They are disabled by outside forces. They choose to be called "Disabled People" because of collective oppression and solidarity.

More specifically, the following are recommended:

- **Avoid able-bodied person as the opposite of disabled: Use Non-disabled person** 'Disability' is not a description of a personal characteristic. A disabled person is not a 'person with a disability' as the person does not *own* the disability in the way that you might be 'a person with brown hair'. Consequently, the opposite of 'disabled' is not 'able-bodied' or 'abled', but '**non-disabled**'
- **Avoid afflicted or affliction:** Use '**impairment**' or **disabled people** depending on the context. Afflicted is used in the Bible and implies that some higher being has cast a person down ('affligere' is Latin for to knock down, to weaken), or is causing them pain or suffering.
- **Avoid cripple(d):** Use **person who has / person with** - The word comes from Old English crypel or creopel, both related to the verb 'to creep'. These, in turn, come from old (Middle) German 'kripple' meaning to be without power. The word is extremely offensive.
- **Avoid the disabled, the blind, the deaf:** To call any group of people 'the' anything is to dehumanise them. **Use blind people, deaf people or disabled people.** If Deaf people are sign language users, use a capital D as they see themselves primarily as a linguistic minority.
- **Avoid Dumb or Dumbo:** Popularised in films such as 'Dumb and Dumber' which makes fun of people with a learning difficulty. The original meaning is not to be able to speak. This has come to be seen as negative from the days when profoundly deaf people were thought of as 'stupid', because non-deaf people did not understand their communication systems.
- **Avoid Dwarf: Use small or short person.** Dwarf had origins in Old English *dweorh*, Norse *dvergr* or Old Saxon *dwerg* meaning 'very short human being'. The Brothers Grimm popularised the ancient folklore of Europe and portrayed them as not human, shy, retiring, heathenish, hating the clearing of forests, agriculture, new fangled pounding-machinery for

<sup>17</sup>Drawing on Mole Chapman, 2010 [http://www.equalitytraining.co.uk/images/news/language\\_of\\_respect.pdf](http://www.equalitytraining.co.uk/images/news/language_of_respect.pdf) and Richard Rieser, 2004 All Equal All Different A Guide for Teachers [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21238\\_Teach\\_Guide.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21238_Teach_Guide.pdf)

ore<sup>18</sup> - the idea of malevolent gremlins against progress. In stories such as Rumpelstiltskin and Snow White, ideas of 'otherness' are popularised.

- **Avoid Feeble-minded: Use person with learning difficulty.** The word feeble comes from old French meaning 'lacking strength' and from Latin 'flebilis', which meant 'to be lamented'. Its meaning was formalised in the Mental Deficiency Act 1913, indicating 'not an extremely pronounced mental deficiency, but one still requiring care, supervision and control'.
- **Avoid Freak:** This should not be used. It means strange or abnormal and is associated with *freak show* where people who were very small, tall, large or with other visible differences or impairments were put on display for the public gaze in 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. See the film the 'Elephant Man'. There is often a harassing prurience involved in staring at people who are different or their internet images.
- **Avoid handicapped: Use disabled people,** handicap means having an imposed disadvantage. The word may have several origins:
  - from horse races round the streets of Italian City States, such as Sienna, where the best riders had to ride one-handed, holding their hat in their other hand to make the race more equal.
  - by association with begging. Penitent 'sinners' (often disabled people) in many parts of Europe were forced into begging to survive and had to go up to people 'cap in hand'.
  - from a 17<sup>th</sup> century game called 'cap i' hand' in which players showed they accepted or rejected a disputed object's valuation by bringing their hands either full or empty out of a cap, in which forfeit money had been placed. This practice was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to show whether people agreed to a horse carrying extra weight in a race (i.e. deliberately giving it a disadvantage).
- **Avoid Idiot:** The word dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and comes from the Latin word 'idiota', meaning 'ignorant person'. Again, it featured in the Mental Deficiency Act 1913 (see Feeble-minded), where it denoted someone that they should be detained for the whole of their lives.
- **Avoid Imbecile, Moron(ic) or Stupid:** Imbecile has been around since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and comes from the Latin, imbecillus, meaning 'feeble' (literally 'without support' and was originally used mainly in a physical sense). It was similarly defined in the Mental Deficiency Act, as someone incapable of managing their own affairs. Moron, Greek, meaning 'foolish, dull, sluggish or stupid' was used in America at the start 20<sup>th</sup> century 'scientifically' to denote 'one deficient in judgement and sense'. 'Stupid' should also be avoided.
- **Avoid Invalid: Use disabled person.** Literally means 'not valid', from Latin 'invalidus'. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century it came to have a specific meaning, when referring to people, as 'infirm' or disabled.
- **Avoid Lame: Use disabled person.** Coming from Old English *lama* Old German *lahm* and Old Norse *lami* meaning crippled, paralytic or weak. In Middle English came to mean 'crippled' in hands or feet. A variant is lame duck meaning any disabled person or thing or lame brain meaning learning difficulties. In modern slang 'lame' is used for someone or something that is un-cool, boring, not exciting, not funny, weak, annoying, inadequate or a loser. In this respect 'lame' is used like 'gay' and should be challenged as it derives from the original disablist meaning.
- **Avoid the Mentally Handicap(ped): Use person with a learning difficulty.** In the UK over 500,000 people with learning difficulties were locked away in 'Mental Handicap Hospitals'

<sup>18</sup> "Teutonic Mythology," Jacob Grimm, transl. Stallybrass, 1883



because tests showed they had low Intelligence Quotients (IQ). These tests have since been shown to be culturally biased and only to measure one small part of how the brain works. People with learning difficulties have chosen the name "people with learning difficulties".

- **Avoid Mental, Nutter, Lunatic, Loony, Insane, Weird, Weirdo, Crazy, Bonkers, Psycho or Mad and other such words:** All these are informal (slang) and offensive words that originate from historic disruptions of people with mental health issues. One in four people have a major bout of mental distress or become mental health system users. 1 in 10<sup>19</sup> of school age students are diagnosed with mental health issues at some point in their schooling. Such young people need understanding, support and counselling, not harassment and name calling.
- **Avoid 'Mong': Use person with Down's Syndrome if their impairment is relevant otherwise use person with learning difficulty or disabled person.** Langdon Down was a doctor who worked at the London Hospital in Whitechapel in the 1860s. He noticed that around 1 in 800 babies were born with pronounced different features and capabilities. Their features reminded him of Mongolian people. He wrongly postulated that there was a hierarchy of races (in descending order) - European, Asian, African and Mongols. Each was genetically inferior to the group above them. This was a racist theory. People with Down's Syndrome find the use of the word 'mong' extremely offensive.
- **Avoid 'people with disabilities':** The term is used in the US and literature from overseas: but it assumes that the *person* has the disability. **Use 'Disabled people'** as this recognises the social oppression and barriers beyond the person.
- **Avoid Retard(ed): Use person with learning difficulty or disabled person.** The word "retard" or "retarded" comes from the term "mental retardation" which has historically been used in America to describe delayed development in a person. The words "retard" and "retarded" have evolved into general insults.
- **Avoid Spazz, spazzie or spastic: Use person with Cerebral Palsy if their impairment is relevant, otherwise disabled person.** The medical term "spastic" became used to describe cerebral palsy. However, the word began to be used as an insult and became a term of abuse used to imply stupidity or physical 'clumsiness'. It was often shortened to forms such as "spaz". Most people use it now for someone or something who is considered 'useless'.
- **Avoid suffering from/sufferer: Use person who has/ person with an impairment.** In this way we can denote the difference between illness, difference, and social oppression.
- **Avoid victim (of): Use person who has / person with.** These are neutral terms, unlike victim. Disabled people are not victims of their impairment because this implies they are singled out for punishment. Similarly, the word sufferer can imply someone upon whom something has been imposed as a punishment.
- **Avoid wheelchair bound: Use wheelchair user.** Wheelchair users see their wheelchair as a means of mobility and freedom, not something that restricts them, apart from problems with lack of access.



<sup>19</sup> Young Mind [http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/whats\\_the\\_problem](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/about/whats_the_problem)

## 8. How to discuss disability and disablism in class

Here are some ways for teachers to create the ethos of anti-disablism and acceptance of difference which are essential to minimise disablist bullying.

1. **Hold staff training and work out your school policy** and how you will value difference and how you will raise disability equality across the curriculum including language.
2. **Don't shy away from the word 'disabled'**: It is a term you can use to describe the ways in which people are treated by society, rather than a description of someone's impairment.
3. **Talk about disablism**: this should be part of general discussions about differences, e.g. of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, culture and be part of the working vocabulary of teachers.
4. Teachers can help to introduce disability equality issues to their class by **inviting a disabled adult or young person**, who has an understanding of the social model of disability, to talk to them. Prepare the class by covering what 'disability' and 'impairment' mean, and discussing who is disabled. 'All the same, all different' might be the theme here.
  - a) Explain the difference between being short-term ill or injured and having an impairment. Many children have experience of being ill or injuring themselves. Talk about what this is like and what changed in the way their body works and how they felt. Explain that being disabled is something that happens to your body when you don't get better or it takes more than a year to get better. List the different types of impairment: visual, hearing, mental, physical and when parts inside don't work as they should.
  - b) Explain that once a person gets used to their impairment, it is the way people think about them and the way they make buses, buildings, roads, work, cinemas, homes, shops and schools that stops them doing things.
  - c) Ask the disabled person to talk from their own experience, which is most powerful. They should cover the ways people are discriminated against, e.g. being bullied just because they are disabled. Children need to understand that disability discrimination is oppression. This can be linked to racism, sexism and homophobia.
  - d) The class should discuss bullying because of how someone looks, sounds, seems intellectually (e.g. people with learning difficulties) or behaves. The children will talk about their own experiences and about disabled people they know. They should be encouraged to talk about how any experiences of bullying made them feel. Any disabled children in the class should feel empowered and able to talk, including those with hidden impairments (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, chronic asthma, Autism).
  - e) Use the resources Disabled People Who Have made a Difference<sup>20</sup>.
5. In assemblies to **explain the impact of disability hate crime and disablism** on disabled peoples' lives. Emphasise that all this usually starts with notions of normal/abnormal and labelling and categorising people. The disablist language leads to harassment and violence and in the perpetrators' mind it is almost as if this gives them permission to act in this way.



<sup>20</sup> [https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/appendix-1\\_0.docx](https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/appendix-1_0.docx)

The History of the oppression of disabled people is little known and makes a powerful case for respect and equality. Teachers will have to judge what their class are able to cope with, though generally they can cope with more than expected<sup>21</sup>.

**6. Include disabled people in all areas of the curriculum**

e.g. Van Gogh, Monet, Matisse, Frida Kahlo in Art, in Maths set the children the task of measuring the ratios needed for ramping the building for wheelchair access or graphing disability and employment statistics, in English books like 'Of Mice and Men' or 'To Kill a Mocking Bird' have a stereotypical theme. Use disability as a topic in factual writing<sup>22</sup>. Find books where disabled people are just part of the story e.g. primary 'Seal Surfer', 'Letang and Julie'.

**7. Use stories, songs, music, drama, role-play, art to explore issues of difference.**

**8.** Take the class/group on a trip around your local shopping centre with a large-scale map of the area and individual units. Use a pre-agreed coding system to record the types of shop or service – food, supermarket, hardware, hairdresser, bank, restaurant or chemist. **Note down barriers for deaf or blind people, wheelchair users and people with learning difficulties.** Ask them to note any adaptations they see that enable disabled people to use the service.

On return to the classroom, map and graph the results and hold a discussion. Groups in the class could undertake these different activities. Ensure a discussion is held on language and all children are using the right terms. The Equality Act 2010 says that all service providers have to make permanent reasonable adjustments to their service so that disabled people can access it. You could then:

- a) Write a letter to the service provider explaining what you found out about access and what impact this may have on disabled people;
- b) Design and make a poster showing why access is good for everyone;
- c) Devise a short play on the issue; or
- d) Hold an assembly where the class presents what they did to the rest of the school<sup>23</sup>.

**9. Don't Call Me Names.** Either working on the board with the whole class working or in groups on flip chart paper, ask the class to list all the words they have ever heard to describe

**“We need to take it back and actually have a really serious talk with children and explain that there are words that are really quite derogatory towards disabled people and kind of bring it back to being really important and raising awareness that we shouldn't use that language”**

Young disabled person

**I think there is a lot within disablist bullying that is kind of ignored and not explored enough within schools. Any kind of 'ism' like racism or disablism is kind of shut away in schools, but actually I think schools need to face it and challenge it. Because without challenge, it's not going to get any better, so that's my view”**

Young disabled person

<sup>21</sup> The history of the oppression of disabled people <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/10881/Challenging-Bullying-and-harassment-of-disabled-people-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Many more examples can be found at <http://worldofinclusion.com/resources/#curriculum> and at <https://www.teachers.org.uk/node/19648>

<sup>23</sup> St Peters School in Tower Hamlets undertook this activity (see clip) They started with a lesson on language and then wanted to see how these negative values informed the local built environment. <http://worldofinclusion.com/st-peters-school-london-docks/> 4.42 minutes

disabled people. Now ask the class or groups to identify all the words that are negative. Have a discussion about how they might feel if called these names. Have some cards with the origins of these words (See Section of this publication Guidelines to Respectful Language & NUT website further activities<sup>24</sup>).

10. **Images of disabled people in stories, advertisements, TV and film, in magazines and newspapers and on the internet.** Have a general discussion about absence, when 20% of population are disabled or stereotypical portrayal. Look at fairy stories and other well-known children's stories. In groups or altogether re-tell a story to show disabled characters positively. On television and in film, ask the class to list all the portrayals of disabled people they can think of. Note the language used to describe the people. KS2 and secondary can examine a collection of newspapers and magazines and find all the negative and stereotyped stories and note the language used. Group the portrayals they have mentioned under the different stereotypes<sup>25</sup>. A list of stereotypes and examples can be found at 'Disabling Imagery'<sup>26</sup>. Examine all language used. Analyse stereotypes and disablist language. This is often the last item on TV news when disabled people doing ordinary things are greatly praised-drawing on the assumed audience perception that they cannot ordinarily do these things. "Overcoming disability" or as children get older talk about the idea disabled people are "sexless and incapable of adult relationships" - again wrong and stereotyped.<sup>27</sup>
11. **Make sure that you do not talk about disability as an affliction as opposed to a difference.** Disabled pupils need positive role models of disabled adults as well as a positive vocabulary to talk about themselves and their lives.
12. Encourage all pupils to **report disablist name calling** in the bullying monitoring system and ensure all staff always challenge all negative/prejudicial language and that children learn to and the reasons why they should.
13. **Be prepared to talk about impairments.** Give disabled pupils space to talk about their impairments if they feel comfortable. Make it possible for them to identify with you/them. This is to develop knowledge and challenge ignorance. Ask disabled people what their needs are, rather than assuming you can figure it out by looking at them.
14. **Display images of disabled children and adults doing interesting or active things**<sup>28</sup>. Make sure books have non-stereotypical disabled people portrayed<sup>29</sup>.
15. **Ask children if they know any disabled people in their families, their streets, in their communities.** Allow them to talk freely but interrupt oppressive attitudes/language in the same way you would interrupt racist or sexist attitudes.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/r6-activities-ks-2-3-4-language-and-disabled-people.docx>

<sup>25</sup> [http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/disability\\_in\\_media.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wpcontent/uploads/2014/01/disability_in_media.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Disabling Imagery( <http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/wetransfer-dacfa2.zip> (2004)

<sup>27</sup> Examples in the news [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Examples\\_in\\_the\\_news.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Examples_in_the_news.docx)

Hacked Off – A Journalist's guide to disability. [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/HACKED\\_OFF.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/HACKED_OFF.docx)

What is in the Headlines? [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/What\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_Headlines.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/What_is_in_the_Headlines.docx)

<sup>28</sup> Three useful downloadable sets of posters can be found at <http://ukdhm.org/citizenship-and-secondary-history-these-six-posters-were-produced-by-the-birmingham-disability-history-project/> Primary

[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21222\\_A3\\_Posters.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21222_A3_Posters.pdf) Secondary

[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody\\_Welcome1.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody_Welcome1.pdf) and

[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody\\_Welcome2.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody_Welcome2.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Resources for raising disability in the curriculum, written and web based <http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Resources-1.doc>

## 9. Creating a class environment that challenges disablism

All schools need to have an ethos where all children feel welcome and safe. The school should challenge all forms of prejudice and promote equality through measures such as these:

- Teachers need to promote an ethos in all classes where **children feel able to talk about their lives and feelings, where the class are encouraged to support one another, and work collectively**. The effects of racism, disablism, sexism, homophobia and prejudice can be explained and discussed so the children develop empathy, are able to challenge discrimination and include those who may feel excluded, supporting them within and outside the classroom.
- **Being aware that harassment can take many forms**, from moving slightly away from a child on the carpet to physical attack, is essential. For example not wanting to sit next to a child who looks, acts or behaves differently, who has a skin condition, or not playing with a child who cannot speak.
- **Celebrate all achievements**: Value achievements that all children make.
- **All members of staff should challenge stereotypical and prejudiced comments** used in lessons, the playground and the surrounding environment. Using opportunities, through assemblies, to deal with issues of prejudice through film/TV clips and identifying barriers to disabled people. Presenting life stories of disabled people and how negative attitudes affect them.
- **Making it happen**: Teachers must ensure there is time and space each day when children feel free and comfortable to talk about anything in their lives that interests or troubles them. This can be a starting point for discussing issues of how people are treated, e.g. if a child feels able to talk about their personal experience, or even to express bigoted views, the rest of the class can learn to be supportive or to challenge. This leads children to feeling safe enough to express their own fears.
- **Talk about it**: If anyone is being offensive in any way (however subtle) the teacher (or other member of staff) should discuss this with the whole class/group. The class can discuss the issue and the aim is to develop a positive and supportive class attitude to difference. The child who is being subjected to harassment, however seemingly minor, needs to know the teacher is on their side and that the rest of the class know this. The school should have a consistent policy applied by everyone.
- **A welcoming environment**: If you have developed the supportive ethos described, children will feel responsible for making them feel welcome and looking out for them. It is also desirable for one or two children specifically to be chosen to befriend a new child for the first few weeks.
- Teachers need to **be very aware of how friendship patterns are developing** in the class. If you notice some confident children controlling the forming of friendships and making some children feel unwanted, teachers need to intervene as it can escalate.
- Teachers have immense influence in Early Years, KS1 & KS2 if they make it clear what is acceptable, **children do respond, especially to praise**. Even very young children are able to take on this ethos and make it their own. You cannot force children to be close friends with everyone, but you can teach them to be kind and respectful of others feelings and to treat each other supportively in and out of the classroom/setting.



## 10. Encouraging young people to challenge disablist language

- Working with the young disabled people at the school is the key. You could develop a **peer mentoring scheme**, starting with older disabled pupils, to develop self-empowerment and challenge name calling and other disablist behaviour. If there are no empowered disabled staff who are able to lead this group in the school and who have an understanding of the social model thinking; then the school should get in young disabled mentors/disability equality trainers from local disabled people's organisations. Research has demonstrated that young disabled people found peer mentoring rather than more formal mentoring most useful, especially when based on an understanding that the disabled person was not the problem, the barriers were<sup>30</sup>.
- Hold whole school or year assemblies on disablist bullying** emphasising the damaging impact of the use of derogatory name calling and disablist language. If the staff are not confident, an outside disabled equality trainer should be brought in. This should be followed up with work and discussion in class and/or tutor group, be aimed at understanding the position of disabled people in society. An excellent resource from Greater Manchester Coalition can be used to demonstrate the change in thinking needed.<sup>31</sup> This can be followed up by examining language and why some words are hurtful to disabled people. Use information in this guide or the 'words...words...words' resource sheet.<sup>32</sup> If this is coordinated with work in a number of curriculum areas on disability the young people's understanding will be increased.
- Form, Year or School Councils should then **discuss what needs to be done to challenge disablist bullying and name calling in the school**. If there are not disabled young people on the Council, invite some for this work.
- Developing a **group of young people who volunteer to challenge bullying** has proved most effective especially in secondary school. The example of Levershulme High School and how it changed its culture using peer mediation methods is highly informative.<sup>33</sup> The appointment and training of Anti Bullying Ambassadors has proved most effective.
- Setting up **monitoring systems where young people can report name-calling and derogatory language** by anonymously reporting to school.
- Publicity. A poster campaign around the common spaces of the school with **posters made by the young people** is a very effective talking point. Use new media to empower and challenge, for example, cyber-bullying.



<sup>30</sup> [http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/An-evaluation-of-a-young-disabled-peoples-peer-mentoring-support-project\\_summary\\_2003.pdf](http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/An-evaluation-of-a-young-disabled-peoples-peer-mentoring-support-project_summary_2003.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <http://gmcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Social-Model-pictures-and-words-pdf.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Terminology...Words ....Words.... <http://gmcdp.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/11/terminology-14pt-pdf.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7PQggpKG-w>

## Appendix 1: Case Studies

### St Matthias School, Hackney: Challenging Bullying and Discriminatory Language and Developing a Circle of Friends<sup>34</sup>.

A pupil in Yr 6 was frequently in trouble and presented very challenging behaviour. We discovered that he was being bullied. The children in Yr 6 offered to form a 'Circle of Friends' for the pupil after two EMA teachers started anti-bullying lessons in Yr 6 and later throughout Key Stage 2, then Nursery and KS1.

The group in the Circle of Friends (and the rest of Yr 6) were very supportive and also successfully challenged bullying in the playground. They asked if they could do an assembly for the school. They improvised scenes to show different sorts of bullying and to challenge some discriminatory language commonly heard in the playground. These are some of their statements:-

- "Paki is a racist insult, started by racists who hate Asian people. People from Pakistan are Pakistanis, not Pakis. Salman is from Bangladesh. Therefore he is a Bangladeshi. Don't cuss where people's families come from." Kayode
- "Idiot is a rude word from years ago, when people with learning difficulties were locked away from everyone else. Everyone's brains work differently. Don't call anyone idiot." Tomi
- "Short Hair/Boy. It is sexist to think girls and boys can't have short or long hair or do the same things. [Sexism has been going on for hundreds of years.] It is cool to have your own style. Don't cuss people's hair or how they look." Christopher
- "Fat people are everywhere. They are mums, dads, our teachers, our friends. Fat, thin, big or small. Don't make fun of people's size." Salman
- "Oxfam. Many famous, stylish people buy clothes at Oxfam because they are unusual. It's cooler to have your own style than copy everyone else." Akeem
- "Your mum (with insults). You would hate your mum to be insulted. This is sexist, don't do it!" Akeem

Bullying is now discussed, challenged and admitted to much more openly and there are many more children befriending those who could have been isolated.

In the following 2 years, we ran weekly anti-bullying lessons in every class- Nursery to Yr6. Discussing language used at play time was a starting point. Richard Rieser of World of Inclusion had done assemblies and work on disablist language in the school, so we found no disablist insults (regarding physical impairment), as disabled children and adults were well included and respected. However, there were still some used such as 'idiot'. We have 95% children of Afro-Caribbean heritage, so the racist words were about being 'too Black', ('Blek') or Asian ('Paki'). 'Gay' and 'Your Mum' were used regularly before this project. In the classes children talked openly about their feelings. Those being bullied explained how it made them feel. Those who bullied owned up and we explored the reasons. There were tears and support offered. The awareness throughout the school led to children and staff noticing, challenging and supporting so that bullying was rare. All teachers found this project very effective. We also ran drama classes in Years 5 & 6 teaching Assertive Behaviour rather than Aggressive or Passive. Akeem was a tall, popular pupil, who I met in the street when he was in Yr 8 at Secondary school. He told me that he bullied before our project and now he always thinks of the other person's view and if sees any bullying he defends the one being bullied. He thanked me for

<sup>34</sup> This was presented to the I Power I Conference 18/7/05. Also on a stall at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anti Bullying Alliance Conference 2005.

changing his thinking. N.B. This work should be done daily by all teachers in every school. We only needed to do this project because this was not happening.<sup>35</sup>

### Laburnum School in Hackney 1989<sup>36</sup>,

Rachel, a girl whose impairment was being born without one of her lower arms and hand had managed well when she was in the nursery. She was not bullied, as all the children knew her, and she had explained how she was born this way, but could do most things in her own way. However, when she moved up to Reception she did not want to go out in the playground. Her teacher found out that she was being called names by older children, being made fun of because of her missing arm and prosthesis.

A staff meeting was held with an advisory teacher for disability, Richard Rieser, who was disabled himself. It was agreed that work needed to be done with children across the school and shared with all children at assemblies to change the climate of disability discrimination in the school.

Richard worked across five classes over two terms: class 1 (age 4-5), class 2 (age 5-6), class 3 (age 7), class 4 (age 8-9) and class 5 (age 10-11). Richard explained about being a disabled person and how it was for him at school and the name calling he received. The children wrote about this. They then looked at books with other disabled people's lives in them and drew and wrote about these. These were displayed on walls and shared with the school. Because Richard talked personally even the youngest children could relate to this and empathise.

The work was followed up with examining books, advertising, drama, role play and adapted PE followed by identifying barriers for blind and physically impaired people in the local environment. The teachers thought the work changed both their view and the children's views about disability. The name calling and bullying around disability stopped!

### Disability Awareness Week and Embedding Disability in the Curriculum

Anthony Gell Secondary School<sup>37</sup> is a small comprehensive in Derbyshire serving the town of Worksop and surrounding rural areas. It has a more than average number of students who have special educational needs. Students range from those with learning difficulty to students who go to Oxford. In 2009 an Equality Review identified the school was not doing enough on disability equality. It was decided to hold a disability awareness raising week.

In mixed age tutor groups and classes in the week a range of posters were examined. Students were told to think about what they are seeing and what does it mean.<sup>38</sup> The activities included doing wheelchair basket ball, Boccia and other disabled sports. Bullying and name calling was challenged and language was examined. The result was more empathy and empowerment for the disabled students. This was followed up in 2010 by integrating disability equality into maths, humanities and science lessons. Then a staff working group was set up to plot what needed to be done to continue this initiative across year groups. This will be part of programmes of study, to be more effective not just bolted on.

**What did students think?** "We decided to focus on what are acceptable terms to use and what are not. To look at which areas in the curriculum we could build on. We opened up discussion about disability we haven't seen before. It was a very positive experience for the disabled and non-disabled students. Before they did not understand now they will treat people slightly differently, with more respect, take more risk with more confidence" *Helen Jackson, Deputy Head*

<sup>35</sup> Written by Susie Burrows 2005

<sup>36</sup> As featured in "Disability Equality in the Classroom" Rieser & Mason (1990/1992)  
<http://worldofinclusion.com/res/deinclass/DEC1.PDF> p181-191

<sup>37</sup> This is one of 9 films made for QCDA in 2010 showing how to bring disability into the curriculum

<http://worldofinclusion.com/anthony-gell-comprehensive/>

<sup>38</sup> [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody\\_Welcome2.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody_Welcome2.pdf)



"It made you think about your own behaviour and how maybe you've been insensitive to people or you've not understood things wholly and the list of words we are saying are offensive you could 've said twice a day. I didn't realise that it would hurt other people and it made you think actually I'm not going to do that anymore. I need to understand. Yes, the whole school...you could see a difference through people thinking 'actually no that's not nice, I'm not going to do that'" *Student, Aisha*

"I think that it really helped people realise that others have to live with impairments every day, and that in a way they are stronger because of that. So, I just think maybe people might respect others a bit more because of that week" *Student, Sarah*

### Ashcroft Secondary Academy Year 8

Ashcroft Technology Academy is a co-educational school. It specialises in design and technology. The school became an Academy in September 2007. There are 1106 students on roll. A higher proportion of students are eligible for free school meals than in most schools. Over two thirds of students are from minority ethnic groups and the largest groups are Asian, Black Caribbean and Black African. The total percentage of SEN students in years 7-13 is 20 %. We have an Autistic Resource Centre (ARC).

In the year 8, term 2 English Scheme of Work (SOW), students are encouraged to identify and engage with a range of non-fiction texts. This gives the teacher free rein to explore any relevant areas of interest. This also means that the assessment objectives for the class are focused, allowing for a more structured and cohesive termly plan. Our aims were:

1. To encourage the students to think about the way they see disability.
2. To give students an insight into the daily struggles faced by disabled people and their families (i.e. mobility, lack of support, social care, bullying, etc).
3. To introduce students to the theory of discourse and difference (using disability). Introduce students to the different models of disability and intellectually engage them with the debate about disability and disabling barriers.
4. To look at inclusive education as a human rights issue
5. To encourage students to see the benefits of inclusive education.

It was very important for me that, as the teacher, I 'guided' the students' intellectual considerations of this subject; as opposed to just 'feeding' them with the notion that we should be looking at disability from a social model point of view. In this way, students would engage with the issues that govern debates about policy and change; for example, restructuring and financial implications, societal implications, human rights, the issue of freedom of choice.

A range of approaches were taken to embed inclusion and disability into this term's SOW. As it was non-fiction we started by looking at an article in the Independent newspaper (10/11/09). This was about the mother of a girl with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), intractable epilepsy and cerebral palsy. The pupils looked at how little support the family received and the impact this had on their family. After analysing what Tussie Myerson wrote in the article, the pupils came to the conclusion that Tussie wished her daughter would die because her care had become a burden to her and her family; not because she did not love her daughter

The students were then asked (as a non-fiction writing assessment) to draft a letter to the Myerson's MP on behalf of the family, complaining about the inefficiency of the social services, lack of support etc. The aim of this exercise was to encourage empathy for disabled people and their families and to encourage the students to see themselves as advocates for change in their society (PSHE/Citizenship). The class also considered how people can view disability as an affliction and burden.

This progressed to a lesson on discourse and disability. The students were introduced to the theory that difference and normality are constructions governed by certain ideologies. We took a close look at the use and effect of words such as the following: "us"; "them"; "normal"; "abnormal";

“difference”; “can”; “cannot”; “able” etc . We also looked at how patronising attitudes and language influence the way disabled people may or may not see themselves. This lesson was observed by a member of the English department, who noted the students’ keen participation. He was particularly impressed with how the unit allowed the students to deal with complex theoretical concepts such as ‘discourse’. He voiced how impressed he was with the students’ standard of learning.

A continuation of this lesson was the advert made by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) (see link)<sup>39</sup> The pupils appreciated how the limiting attitudes presented in the advert were reflective of their own approach to disability. Once this was established students were presented with the idea of a fully inclusive education system. This led smoothly on to a debate on “inclusive vs. segregated education” (Speaking and listening assessment). Many started with the idea that inclusive education would have an adverse effect on their own education. The class visualised stereotypical pictures of students “nervously twitching “and “attacking” fellow pupils. Many maintained that segregated schooling was a better idea until they looked at the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)’s inclusion charter and ‘Ten Reasons for Inclusion’. They were able and willing to see that it was a matter of policy and infrastructure and that with the right support inclusive education was a possible ideal.

A group reading of Richard Rieser’s “Social Model” essay provided a few students with “light bulb” moments. They were able to understand how disabled people were limited by society’s disabling barriers. Only a few tube stations have lifts, buses have space for only one wheelchair. Quick fire questions to students included: “A visually impaired person enters a library, what sort of disabling barriers might he/she encounter?” Students were not allowed to use the word can’t in their answers. They really enjoyed this exercise and it was clear that it had led to highly effective learning.

I provided students with a folder of the relevant UNESCO document relating to education which also included the ‘United Nations Declaration of Human Rights’. Their reading assessment was based on the ‘social model/human rights’ argument for inclusive education. Students re read the Social Model essay<sup>40</sup> and read through the Declaration of Human Rights. They were required to prove their understanding by giving an argument for or against inclusive education using evidence from the various texts/resources.

As a class exercise, I presented the students with scenarios in which a disabled pupil/person had been refused entry into education or a job. The students had to act as human rights lawyers and identify which articles they would use to defend their client’s case.

The unit was concluded with a visit from Richard Rieser, World of Inclusion. The students were thoroughly engaged with his presentation. After the talk, several students requested that they be allowed to do an assembly to their year group about disability and inclusion.

**Outcome:** The verbal feedback was extremely positive and as a teacher, my experience with this group on this topic has been one of my most rewarding. **Students are now aware of how to ‘talk about’ disability. They are careful with their words and they discuss celebrating diversity, as opposed to highlighting *d*isability, in a derogatory sense.** The quality of their written work is high due to their high motivation.

As a result of the success of this unit, the English department plan to incorporate it into their SOW and it will be available for teachers who feel comfortable with teaching it. Pupils intend to draft a proposal requesting permission to start a disability and diversity awareness group at the Academy. This will hopefully have a positive effect on the school as a whole and add to the already inclusive environment established here.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3AeIFup1qY&feature=Playlist&p=961CE6A2D1A552BE&index=0>

<sup>40</sup> <http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MEDICAL-MODEL-SOCIAL-MODEL.docx>

<sup>41</sup> Donna Afriyie (GTP English) Ashcroft Academy.

## Appendix 2: Resources

### General Disability Equality

- Disability Equality in the Classroom: A Human Rights Issue Rieser R & Mason M (1990/92)  
Available online <http://worldofinclusion.com/res/deinclass/DEC1.PDF>
- Altogether Better Pack and Films, Comic Relied M.Mason and R. Rieser 1994  
<http://worldofinclusion.com/res/altogether/AltogetherBetter.pdf>
- Film Media Portrayal <http://worldofinclusion.com/res/altogether/atb4.flv>
- All Equal All Different Early Years and KS1 R.Rieser 2004  
[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21238\\_Teach\\_Guide.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21238_Teach_Guide.pdf)
- Posters are a useful talking point [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21222\\_A3\\_Posters.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21222_A3_Posters.pdf)
- Disabling Imagery BFI/World of Inclusion R.Rieser 2004
- Useful History guide and analysis of moving images and disability stereotypes.  
<http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/wetransfer-dacfa2.zip>
- Stereotypes of Disability: 1 in 8 Group Broadsheet [http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/disability\\_in\\_media.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/v3/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/disability_in_media.pdf)
- Secondary 15 Posters Everybody Welcome Here
  - [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody\\_Welcome1.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody_Welcome1.pdf)
  - [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody\\_Welcome2.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/every/Everybody_Welcome2.pdf)
- Katharine Quarmby (2011) 'Scapegoat : Why we are failing disabled people' London, Portobello Books

### Specific Resources & Activities from World of Inclusion

- Ways of Promoting Positive Attitudes Toward Disabled People For Pupils.  
<http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Ways.doc>
- Language and Terminology <http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Language.doc>
- English Work in KS3 and KS4  
[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/English\\_Work\\_in\\_KS3\\_and\\_KS4.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/English_Work_in_KS3_and_KS4.docx)
- Examples in the news [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Examples\\_in\\_the\\_news.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/Examples_in_the_news.docx)
- Hacked Off – A Journalist's guide to disability.  
[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/HACKED\\_OFF.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/HACKED_OFF.docx)
- What is in the Headlines?  
[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/What\\_is\\_in\\_the\\_Headlines.docx](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/qca/What_is_in_the_Headlines.docx)
- Disabled People who have made a difference –Booklet  
[http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21221\\_Difference.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21221_Difference.pdf)

### Specific Activities from NUT

- Thinking and Speaking about disability <https://www.teachers.org.uk/node/19646>
  - <https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/r6-activities-ks-2-3-4-language-and-disabled-people.docx>
  - <https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/r7-resource-sheet-the-origin-of-negative-words-associated-with-disability.docx>

- <https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/r1-teachers-guide-ways-of-thinking-and-speaking-about-disabled-people.docx>
- Disabled People who have made a difference Activity
  - [https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/appendix-1\\_0.docx](https://www.teachers.org.uk/files/appendix-1_0.docx)
  - [http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21221\\_Difference.pdf](http://worldofinclusion.com/res/alleg/21221_Difference.pdf)

### Crown Prosecution Service

- Schools and Hate Crime Project- Some very useful resources  
[http://www.cps.gov.uk/assets/dhc\\_ppts/Guidance\\_for\\_Teachers\\_v2.pdf](http://www.cps.gov.uk/assets/dhc_ppts/Guidance_for_Teachers_v2.pdf)

### Department of Work and Pensions Office Disability Issues

#### Language and Disability

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability--2>
- <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130812104657/http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/inclusive-communications/representation/language.php>

### Scope

- Talking About Disability <http://www.scope.org.uk/awkward/disability-language>
- Assumptions to Avoid <http://www.scope.org.uk/awkward/avoid-assumptions>

### Mencap

- Excellent short cartoons on ridicule and name calling <http://www.dontstickit.org/school.html>

### Challenging bullying and harassment of disabled people in the class

- <http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/10881/Challenging-Bullying-and-harassment-of-disabled-people-FINAL.pdf>

### Leeds University

- Inclusion in Literature for Primary Schools:: A guide to books for disability awareness  
<http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/deeps/inclusionliteratureguide.pdf>

### Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

This coalition covers 10 Metropolitan Boroughs in Greater Manchester and is run and controlled by disabled people. They have a very effective

#### Guidelines on terminology from a social model perspective

- Terminology.....Words.....Words.....Words <http://gmcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/terminology-14pt-pdf.pdf>
- Simple Introduction to Social Model <http://gmcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Social-Model-pdf-14pt.pdf>
- Graphic and Words <http://gmcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Social-Model-pictures-and-words-pdf.pdf>
- Transitions Developed by Including Young People Project <http://gmcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/transitions-general-14pt-PDF.pdf>
- Joseph Rowntree Evaluation of peer mentoring project [http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/An-evaluation-of-a-young-disabled-peoples-peer-mentoring-support-project\\_summary\\_2003.pdf](http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/An-evaluation-of-a-young-disabled-peoples-peer-mentoring-support-project_summary_2003.pdf)