A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

Tutor guide: supporting trainee teachers to understand the impact of a visible difference

CHANGING FACES

ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE
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CONTENTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Teachers and other education professionals have a key role in supporting students with a visible difference and creating an inclusive learning environment.

Introduction

More than a million people in the UK have a visible difference – a mark, scar or condition that affects their appearance – including 86,000 children and young people of school age. With the number of students with a visible difference increasing in our schools, it's vital that new teachers are given the confidence and resources to cope with the challenges this presents.

It is important for all of us to be aware of our own implicit bias and reflect on our feelings and ideas about appearance and disfigurement.

Initial teacher training providers have a significant role in creating the learning environments of the future. If we want our schools to be inclusive, we need to tackle the issues head-on and ensure that our newly qualified teachers have a deep understanding of the challenges they will face in school.

This pack aims to provide resources for teacher training providers to use within their training in supporting trainees to better understand the strategies and challenges when working with students who have a visible difference.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

An Implicit Attitudes Test found that 66% of people held negative attitudes towards people with a visible difference.

Attitudes towards looking different

Many of the issues facing children and young people are similar to those facing children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, there are some experiences that are particularly common for children and young people with a disfigurement or visible difference.

According to Changing Faces (2018), only three in ten young people would consider being friends with someone who has a visible difference.

An Implicit Attitudes Test (IAT) carried out on behalf of Changing Faces in 2017 found that 66% of people held negative attitudes towards people with a visible difference. There are also a number of persistent myths and assumptions which affect how people with a visible difference are viewed by society, including the idea that people who look different have little chance of a successful, happy life.

Unconscious attitudes can lead to some teachers having significantly lower expectations of students with a visible difference and becoming resigned to appearance-related bullying being inevitable for students with a visible difference. It is crucial that we are able to recognise and challenge our own implicit bias, as well as supporting students to do the same.

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KEEP IN MIND

Appropriate language

When using these resources, it is important to bear in mind that not everyone feels comfortable with the word 'disfigurement', preferring instead to use 'visible difference', 'unusual appearance' or 'looks different'. However, the term 'disfigurement' is used in a legal context, as it is enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010, which gives legal protection to people with 'severe disfigurements'.

The language we use in relation to people with a visible difference is very important, so appropriate use of language needs to be modelled from the start. When talking about visible difference, support trainees to use non-judgemental, matter-of-fact language. For example, 'Amina has a cleft lip', 'James has a large birthmark on his face' and 'Fiona is a burns survivor'. Avoid using phrases such as 'burns victim' or 'terribly scarred' as these are examples of sensationalist, judgemental language.

Potential triggers

It is possible that some of the resources may be emotionally triggering for some trainees. Some images and videos are included and it is important to monitor trainees' responses to these.

There may be trainees who have a visible difference, or have a family member or friend who does. We do not expect anyone to share their personal or family experience, although they may make the choice to do so. If any trainees are distressed by the experience, they should be advised to seek immediate support from appropriate agencies.

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SUPPORT FOR TUTORS

Information for tutors and education professionals

Here are some tips on some of the difficulties you may encounter when dealing with the issue of visible difference:

Be aware of unconscious bias leading to different treatment of students
Unconscious attitudes towards people who look different can lead to teachers having lower expectations of students or being resigned to appearance-related bullying. We need to be aware of this and challenge our unconscious bias to ensure equity and the same high expectations for all students.

Challenge negative stereotypes of visible difference
Negative stereotypes of visible difference reinforce the myths that people who look different can't have a happy life, require surgery to 'fix' their appearance, or are bad and scary people.

Clarify the meaning of face equality
Remind trainees that 'face equality' means equal expectations and equal respect, not compensatory special treatment because you feel sorry for someone that you teach.

Understand our responsibility for tackling bullying
Emphasise the importance of addressing appearance-related bullying and taking it seriously. So that bullying can be stopped, school staff can – and must – intervene every time someone in their school is harassed or bullied.

Support trainees to support their students
We need to equip students with personal and social tools for the times when they feel vulnerable about the way they look. Encourage trainees to talk to their students about visible difference to raise awareness and increase their knowledge and understanding.

For further information and support, visit changingfaces.org.uk or click on the following links:

- Teacher Guides for supporting pupils

- Changing Faces Classroom Resources

USING THE RESOURCES

Introduction to using the tutor resources

The resources have been designed for sessions that last for about two hours. The amount of time available will vary, so you will need to organise the activities to fit in the time you have. The two sessions are designed to be carried out at different times. Session One introduces a range of key concepts and policies and ends with some suggested activities for trainees to focus on in school. Session Two should be undertaken at least one month after Session One and ideally after the trainees have spent some time in school. During the second session, trainees will explore some tried and tested resources for use with students. They will reflect on how they could make best use of these and develop the ideas further.

Throughout both sessions, trainees will have the opportunity to listen to experiences of school from children and young people with a visible difference. Giving children and young people a voice is vital in devising strategies to meet the needs of any child or young person, but especially those with a visible difference. Trainees will also hear from parents and teachers. By providing a range of perspectives, trainees will be able to reflect on the diverse needs and priorities that exist for those involved in the care of children and young people in school.

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SESSION ONE

Resources required:

- Presentation slides
- Access to the internet
- Audio speakers (for the videos)
- Sugar paper and pens

Slides

Slide 2
This slide provides the aims for the session.

Slide 3
This slide suggests questions for group work to begin the discussion of visible difference/disfigurement. Allow time for small groups to feed back to everyone. They may have unanswered questions, but at this stage it is useful to get their initial thoughts and ideas.

Some people with a visible difference prefer not to use the word 'disfigurement' due to its negative connotations. However, 'disfigurement' is the term that is used in a legal context as it is enshrined in law in the Equality Act 2010. If you need to talk about a student's visible difference, make sure you use the phase or description your student and their parents are happy with.

Slides 4-5
These slides provide some examples of the causes of visible differences and some images of people with visible differences. It may be useful to allow some discussion around any issues that arise from either of these slides. There may be questions about the people in the images that you cannot answer. There is no need to worry about this, as the images are only there to provide examples of a few visible differences, there is no need for you to be able to provide any information about the specific details of the visible differences.

Slides 6-11
This part of the session is based on the trailer for the film 'Wonder'. The trailer provides opportunities for trainees to reflect on the thoughts and feelings of those who may be impacted by the arrival of Auggie, including Auggie himself. Play the video for trainees and then look at the questions to give them specific aspects to focus on. Play the video a second time and then discuss the questions.

Slides 12-14
These slides provide an introduction to the Equality Act (2010) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Equality Act applies to all the nations in Great Britain, but not to Northern Ireland.
The discussion should focus on the sorts of everyday activities that can be affected by having a visible difference.

Ask trainees to think about key issues such as:

- If a person has a visible difference, they are perceived as 'different' and will always be noticed wherever they go.

- People will often make assumptions about what a person with a visible difference is capable of based solely on their appearance.

- People may avoid making contact with a person with a visible difference because they feel uncomfortable.

- Some people may be embarrassed to be seen with someone with a visible difference and so may avoid going out with them.

Slides 15–22
The activities and information on these slides focus on implicit bias and how this impacts our behaviours and the decisions we make. This part of the session is very important and can be quite challenging to discuss. Make sure that trainees understand that we all have implicit biases, but that what's important is that we are aware of this and can challenge ourselves when we make judgements about people.

Slides 23–27
This part of the session provides trainees with the opportunity to listen to the voices of children and young people, and their parents. It is important to take the time to cover this section in plenty of detail, and to provide time for trainees to think about the implications on the well-being of students with a visible difference if they feel marginalised. Research suggests that students with a visible difference are at greater risk of social isolation/exclusion, so the issues raised in response to the students' voices need to be discussed and possible solutions identified.

Slide 28
This slide gives some ideas for activities to support development during the next period of school experience.

Slide 29
The poem by Hannah Lindfield provides a young person's experience of living with a visible difference. For more information about Hannah's life, go to hannahlindfield.co.uk. This ending will provide trainees with a description of what life is like for a child or young person living with a visible difference.

SESSION TWO

This session provides an opportunity to follow up on the first session and begin to think more deeply about the role of the school and how best to respond to the needs of individual students with a visible difference.

Resources required:

- Presentation slides
- Access to the internet
- Audio speakers (for the videos)
- Post-it notes/scrap paper
- Pencils and colouring pens/pencils

Slides

Slide 2
This slide provides the aims for the session.

Slide 3-4 The first activity refers back to Session One and gives trainees an opportunity to reflect on their developing understanding since that first session.

Slides 5-12 introduce trainees to the in-school sessions that Changing Faces have produced for students. You should refer to the handbook provided and review the activities to decide which ones will be best for your trainees. Take them through the sessions and allow time for reflection and feedback.

Slides 13-16 The video clips provide advice from children and young people, and teachers. The videos present interesting contrasts and similarities. Reflect on how this shows why it is so important to allow children and young people a voice and for them to know that they are heard.

Slide 17 This activity provides an opportunity to reflect on the learning and think about how to make best use of the resources for schools.

Slide 18 This slide provides a link to a range of other resources that have been produced by Changing Faces, for use in schools.

RESOURCE FEEDBACK

We would love to know what you think of these resources and how we can improve them. If you are willing to give feedback please use the QR code below to take you to our feedback form or visit:

https://www.changingfaces.org.uk/awod-trainee-feedback/

Or you can email education@changingfaces.org.uk

How to scan QR codes

1. Open your camera app.
2. Focus the camera on the QR code by gently tapping the code.
3. Follow the instructions on the screen to complete the action.