

## 7-11 GUIDE 4. WORKING INCLUSIVELY WITH GROUPS

### WORKING WITH APPEARANCE AND DIFFERENCE

Children in their junior years are interested in practically everything. With age, they also gain a sharpened awareness of their own and others' appearance, and tend to make more judgements based on appearance. Dislike of people with a visible difference begins to show as children go through the junior years: they become less accepting<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore important to include learning activities about appearance and difference, even if you do not have a pupil with a disfigurement in your school at this time. [See A World of Difference resources](#) for classroom lessons and assemblies.

Every child needs to be able to feel both that they are an individual and that they share things in common with others. Teaching about difference should address issues of visible difference in among all the other differences that make everyone an individual.

It is sometimes thought that it will be helpful to talk to all the pupils about a pupil who is different, perhaps just before they join the school, or before they return after an injury or illness which has altered their appearance. However, even if the message aims to encourage pupils to behave inclusively and pleasantly, research has shown that talking to a group of children about a child tends to have the opposite effect<sup>2</sup>.

However, if the child themselves decided to run an assembly to talk about their visible difference or want the school to run one, then that can be beneficial for the child and their classmates. Do however ensure that the child is consulted about the content and if they want to be present or not – it's the child's right to choose.

It is important that a learning activity is not led by visible difference. This would tend to construct visible difference as a problem rather than as a part of the ordinary variety that can be recognised among all people.

The Changing Faces website has many activities you can use with your class as well as activities connected with novels such as [Wonder](#) by R.J.Palacio.

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<sup>1</sup>Richardson (1970) quoted in Bull,R. & Rumsey,N. (1988) *The Social Psychology of Facial Appearance*, Springer-Verlag, New York Inc.

<sup>2</sup>Vandell,D.L. & George,L.B. (1981) in Frances,J. (2004) *Educating Children with Facial Disfigurement – Creating Inclusive School Communities*, RoutledgeFalmer, London. p36.