

GUIDE 4. WORKING INCLUSIVELY WITH GROUPS

1 WORKING WITH DIFFERENCE

Young children are so interested in the world about them that there is a good case for including group activities about appearance and difference. For example, the topic 'Ourselves' is taught through wide-ranging activities across many different subject areas. To make the activities as inclusive as possible here are some useful pointers:

- Children are all different. A child who looks unusual is not a 'different' sort of child in a class group where all the other children are the same. Every child needs to be able to feel different and special and that there are things they share in common with other children. "Leonie has her hair in plaits and Fatima has a pony tail. They both like to have shiny bobbles in their hair."
- Learning activities can address issues of visible difference in amongst all the other small and big differences that make each child an individual.
- 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.
- Even very young children can be challenged in their assumptions about others – "What makes you think that big scaly dragon is wicked?"
- The whole person includes inner qualities as well as outward appearance and self-presentation – "Amit has bright eyes and a big smile. He can run fast and he is very good at counting."
- Be matter of fact about unusual features – "The mark across Gemma's forehead is there because she had an accident. She is OK now and has a scar." Small children often have scratches and bruises from knocks and scrapes as they run about, and are usually more than happy to show these to the group!
- Introduce appropriate vocabulary – "Adam's face is smooth in some places and bumpy in some places, it is called a birthmark."

2 USING STORIES TO DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING

A picture/story book that focuses on difference can be helpful for opening up discussions. A good example is *Something Else* by Kathryn Cave and Chris Riddell there are [teacher notes](#) for this book which you may find useful.

You could also use *The Smeds and the Smoos*, by Julia Donaldson or *I like Myself!*, by Karen Beaumont.