



Teacher guidance

#ImWithSam

This guidance has been written to accompany the Dimensions #ImWithSam lesson, and support the [#ImWithSam campaign](#). It has been written for key stage 3 pupils, and can be used flexibly within year groups to suit individual schools.

The lesson looks at raising awareness of people with learning disabilities and autism as part of a diverse society, asks pupils to reflect on the impact of ways in which people with learning disabilities and autism are perceived, judged, described and treated, and explores ways to question, challenge and change these discriminatory behaviours.

You should read and consider the guidance first, before delivering the lesson. The lesson plan is not designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme. Please note that all timings given are approximate, and are for guidance only.

Preparing to teach

This lesson should be taught within the context of a planned series of lessons looking at issues around diversity, equality, celebrating difference, and reasons for bullying. The teaching should be set within the context of other types of bullying and discrimination, such as racism, sexism or homo-, bi-, or transphobic (HBT) bullying, and should encourage pupils to view bullying or discriminatory behaviour towards people with learning disabilities and autism as equally unacceptable.

Links to the PSHE Association programme of study

Each of the three core themes of the PSHE programme of study contains suggested learning opportunities which provide the context through which learners can develop knowledge, essential skills and attributes. The learning opportunities should be used flexibly according to learners' development, readiness and needs, and taking account of prior learning, experience and understanding. The table below shows the learning opportunities from each of the three PSHE education core themes at KS3 which are most relevant to learning about diversity and discrimination, with the specific focus on learning disabilities and autism. Learning should always take place within a spiral programme of knowledge, skills and attribute development, where prior learning is revisited, reinforced and extended in age- and stage-appropriate contexts.

Core theme	Learning opportunity in key stage 3
Health and wellbeing	H2: To recognise that the way in which personal qualities, attitudes, skills and achievements are evaluated by others, affects confidence and self-esteem.
Relationships	<p>R27: About the unacceptability of sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour, the need to challenge it and how to do so.</p> <p>R28: To recognise bullying and abuse in all its forms (including prejudice-based bullying both in person and online/via text, abuse, exploitation and trafficking) and to have the skills and strategies to manage being targeted or witnessing others being targeted.</p> <p>R29: The support services available should they feel, or believe others feel, they are being abused or in an unhealthy relationship and how to access them.</p>
Living in the Wider World	<p>L3: The similarities, differences and diversity among people of different race, culture, ability, disability, sex, gender identity, age and sexual orientation and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice, bigotry, bullying and discrimination on individuals and communities.</p> <p>L4: Strategies for safely challenging stereotyping, prejudice, bigotry, bullying and discrimination when they witness or experience it in their daily lives.</p>

This lesson plan is based on a one-hour lesson. The timings given are the absolute minimum time required to deliver the activities. Whilst it is always important for PSHE education lessons to be pacy, it is equally important to meet the needs of your pupils. More may be gained from spending longer on an in-depth exploration of an activity that has fired up discussion and imagination, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and feel pupils are progressing towards the lesson objectives. When this is the case, it may be more appropriate for you to extend the lesson plan across two or more lessons.

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas, values and attitudes without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. It is good practice for teachers to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave in discussion, such as;
 - ➔ Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - ➔ We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - ➔ We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them, we'll ask the teacher.
 - ➔ We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - ➔ We won't share our own, or our friends', personal experiences.
 - ➔ We won't put anyone on the spot and we have a right to pass.
 - ➔ We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone.
- offer opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class

- make question boxes available in which pupils can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
- provide balanced information and differing views to help pupils clarify their own opinions (making clear that behaviours such as discrimination and bullying are never acceptable in any form)
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – some pupils may have direct experience of some of the issues that the lesson raises, or may themselves have, or have a relative or friend who has a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder or learning disability
- distance the learning from pupils to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom and to keep the learning environment safe
- always work within the school’s policies on safeguarding and confidentiality
- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting pupil welfare
- make pupils aware of sources of support, both inside and outside the school.

Consider any sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils. If there are pupils in the class who are identified as having learning disabilities or autism, you may want to give them prior notice that this issue will be covered, and the option to withdraw themselves from the lesson if they wish. You should also consider pupils who may have relatives with learning disabilities or autism, and their potential sensitivities. Notice should be given to pastoral and other relevant staff in advance of the lesson.

Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the [PSHE Association](#).

Notes on terminology

When discussing sensitive issues, and encouraging pupils to do the same, it is essential to be clear on what language is acceptable or otherwise and to be precise when introducing definitions. To support teachers in their accuracy and clarity, we recommend using the key terms and definitions below.

Autism	Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are lifelong conditions that affect the way a person communicates with and relates to the world around them. As autism is a spectrum, the way in which each individual is affected will differ from person to person. People with autism may be extremely high functioning or may have no speech at all.
Diversity	Diversity describes the range of difference amongst people in society.
Disablist	A way of speaking about, behaving towards or treating someone which discriminates against them because they have a disability.
Discrimination	To treat someone, or a group of people, unfairly because of something about them they cannot change e.g. their gender, race, sexuality, disability.
Equality	To ensure all people have equal opportunities, are treated fairly and receive the same basic rights.
Hate crime	A crime that is motivated by discrimination. If a crime is deemed a hate crime in a trial, it will carry a more severe sentence.
Inclusion	To be included or accepted without discrimination within a group or society.
Learning disability	A learning disability usually develops before or at birth, and can affect an individual in different ways and with different levels of severity. A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday tasks – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.
Neurodiversity	Neurodiversity recognises that people’s brains work and function differently, and that this affects the way people behave. This challenges the idea that there is one ‘normal’ way of thinking or behaving.

Please note that this lesson and guidance looks at developmental learning disabilities and autism as defined above. Learning disability is often confused with learning difficulty (e.g dyslexia or dyscalculia), and mental health problems, and it may be that pupils suggest these as examples of learning disabilities in the lesson. People who have certain conditions, such as [Downs Syndrome](#) and [Angelman Syndrome](#), will have learning disabilities as part of their condition.

It is important to make clear to pupils that learning difficulties affect specific areas of learning and processing information and do not commonly impact on a person's ability to cope independently or on their intellectual ability. Mental health problems can affect anyone at any time and may be overcome with treatment, which is not true of a learning disability.

Signposting support

Support for pupils

Ensure pupils know who can help them with any issues which might have come up for them in this session, starting with support available in school e.g. tutor or head of year/pastoral care etc. Also signpost:

- Anti-bullying alliance: a coalition of organisations working together to stop bullying (including that of people with learning disabilities and autism), and create safer environments in which young people can live, grow, play & learn.
<http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>
- #ImWithSam campaign: Dimensions' campaign to end autism and learning disability hate crime.
<https://www.dimensions-uk.org/campaign/imwithsam/>

Further information including support for teachers

Teachers wishing to seek further guidance on and information about learning disabilities and autism, or to support the #ImWithSam campaign, can visit:

- Dimensions: Provides support and services for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs, and enables them to be actively engaged in their communities.
<https://www.dimensions-uk.org/>
- The National Autistic Society: the leading UK charity for autistic people (including those with Asperger syndrome) and their families.
<http://www.autism.org.uk/>
- Learning Disability England: a user-led, membership and advocacy organisation for people with learning disabilities, their families and other interested individuals and organisations.
<http://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/>
- Down's Syndrome Association: a charity focussing on all aspects of living successfully with Down's Syndrome. Provides information on all aspects of living with Down's syndrome, including advice about benefits, education, health and social care and employment.
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk
- Angelman Syndrome Support Education and Research Trust (Assert): supports families and carers of people with Angelman Syndrome, raises awareness and carries out research into the condition.
www.angelmanuk.org