

## Teaching Equality and Diversity in DMAT Primary Schools

This statement links to the DMAT Equality Statement which can be found [here](#). The DMAT Equality Statement is, in turn, linked to the public sector equality duty. This is a duty on public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act of 2010.

The three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty are to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

In Primary Schools, in language that children would understand, that means we want;

- 1 – to make sure everyone is treated fairly.
- 2 – to make sure that things are getting better for people who sometimes get treated unfairly
- 3 – to help everyone understand other people and to have good relationships with them.

We know that world is full of diversity and we want to prepare children to meet that with positivity not fear or confusion. Our children grow up in our Devon communities – some of which are not very diverse – but we know they will go out into the world and meet all kinds of people. And we know that, sometimes, in our small communities, we forget to be mindful of the diversity that is around us. And if we don't see it, we can easily be insensitive to it.

No pupil or staff member should be made to feel uncomfortable because they differ from the majority, e.g. in ethnic or social background, in terms of academic ability, neurodiversity, being from financial disadvantage, having English as an additional language or a special educational need and/or disability or any other reason. If this is happening because of our lack of knowledge, then we need to work together to improve our knowledge so that everyone feels welcome in our schools.

### How we Teach Equality and Diversity

Our Trust Equality Statement says that we aim to;

- Provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and achieve under the five outcomes of: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and enjoy economic well-being.
- Include and value the contribution of all families to demonstrate our understanding of equality and diversity.
- Provide positive non-stereotyping information about gender roles, diverse ethnic and cultural groups and people with disabilities.
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of issues of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting equality and valuing diversity.
- Make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting.
- Prepare children for life in a diverse society in which children are able to see their place in the local, regional, national and international community.
- Plan systematically to improve our understanding and promotion of diversity.
- Actively challenge discrimination and disadvantage

We fulfil this duty throughout the year through our PHSCE curriculum, through Collective Worship, through class Circle Times, within nurture groups and as topics arise naturally in class discussions. We address it in informal conversations on the playground and in one-to-one conversations when we are helping children to sort out their differences. Equality and Diversity is not a distinct part of what we do in school – it runs through everything we do.

The Equalities Act of 2010 defines nine groups of people who are often on the receiving end of discrimination and gives a duty to consider those groups of people in our work. We want those people to be treated fairly in our schools – whether they are pupils, staff, parents, or anyone else. We want to get better at making sure those people are being treated fairly, so that things are getting better for them. We want our staff and pupils to understand people with protected characteristics better and to ensure they feel warmly welcomed and fully included in our school communities.

### **The Nine Protected Characteristics**

Those nine protected characteristics defined in the 2010 Equalities Act are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Sex (gender)
4. Race (ethnicity)
5. Pregnancy and Maternity
6. Religion and Belief
7. Sexual Orientation

## 8. Transgender

## 9. Marriage and Civil Partnership

### 1. Age

In our society, often older people are treated as if they are of less worth than younger people. Sometimes they are mocked. We would take actions like taking groups to visit older people, inviting older people in to school – perhaps as reading volunteers or in other roles. We should make sure that our language does not discriminate.

### 2. Disability

Not all disabilities are visible. While most of our children and communities are very understanding and welcoming to people with visible physical disabilities, they may be less understanding and welcoming to people with hidden disabilities. We need to make sure that staff and pupils are warmly welcoming and fully inclusive of people with learning challenges, autistic spectrum conditions, ADHD and other conditions.

### 3. Gender

It is easy to fall into stereotypical attitudes and language and gender assumptions. “Are there some big strong boys here who will help me carry this heavy box?”, “Boys don’t cry”, “Girls aren’t good at maths.” These words can go very deep and create self limiting beliefs that we can carry through life. We believe that boys can make beautiful things, girls can be strong and brave, everyone can be themselves. In our choice of texts and in the way we organise our schools we try not to reinforce unhelpful gender stereotypes.

### 4. Race (ethnicity)

Many of our children don’t have much experience of meeting people from other ethnicities, races or cultures. That puts them at a disadvantage in the diverse modern world where they will meet people from all over the world. And, for those children in our schools who come from other places in the world, a small village primary can be a bewildering place. We want every child to know themselves to be warmly welcomed and fully included. Even if there were no children of different races or ethnicities in one of our schools we would want them to understand how diverse our world is so that they are to be respectful and welcoming when they do meet people from our cultures and countries and so that they can have that understanding of our beautiful world. Sadly, we find that children of different races and cultures do sometimes experience discriminatory language in our schools – this is borne more out of ignorance than malice and we know we have a responsibility to educate.

### 5. Pregnancy and Maternity

In employment law we have a clear duty to ensure that no one is discriminated against because they are expecting or because they have had a baby. Similarly, in Primary, we teach pupils to be respectful and to understand that parents or staff

who are expecting a baby might need things to be a little different. We want them to understand why it is that their teacher is away from school if they are on maternity leave.

## **6. Religion and Belief**

In all our schools we have children coming from homes with a range of religious beliefs. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Pagans – and pupils coming from homes where there may be no religious belief, and parents express that they are humanists, atheist or agnostic. Through our RE curriculum and PHSCE and throughout the way we work with children we help them to understand that encountering a range of belief systems is a beautiful and enriching thing. In all of our schools we have a time of collective worship every day, and that worship is broadly Christian in nature, with our Church of England schools following guidance from the diocese. We are careful to make sure that Collective Worship is invitational, inclusive and inspiring. No adult or child should be making any judgements on another because of their faith – and when those judgements are based in ignorance, we have a duty to challenge it and educate.

## **7. Sexual Orientation**

In primary schools, we don't teach about sexuality. We don't discuss how attraction or sexual behaviour works for heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual people. We do, however, need to ensure that a child who is living with two mums, who has an uncle living in a same sex relationship, whose teacher is gay or who has any other contact with non-heteronormative people is comfortable and confident enough to say "that's ok". As they move through primary to secondary school and out into the world, our pupils will meet people of differing sexualities, we need them to be ready to meet those people and to encounter them without judgement or stereotyped preconceptions. We want everyone – regardless of sexual orientation to feel warmly welcomed and fully included in our schools.

## **8. Gender identity or reassignment**

Many people are anxious about transgender issues. We acknowledge that for some people it is a worrying topic. In primary schools we never promote gender reassignment – we simply wouldn't do that. It's not our job. We are however, intentionally supportive of families and of individuals who are dealing with all sorts of issues and we insist that our schools are a warmly welcoming and fully inclusive place for all the children and families who access them. That means we want children to be ready to feel comfortable with a classmate who is dealing with thoughts and feelings about their gender. We want a child who has a transgender relative to know that the grown ups in their school are respectful and accepting of this. By being kind and matter of fact about this, we hope that we also take some of the sensationalism out of the topic for young people.

## **9. Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Within our Primary Schools we think of this through a child's eyes, and we think of family structures. While some children live with their birth mum and a dad, there are many who have different home stories. Single parent families, step mums and step dads, families with two mums living together, families with two dads. Some of these parents may have been married before the children came along, some till long after, some may never choose to marry. Every family is different and no one can say what makes one family work and another struggle. We want every child to know that their family is 'ok' and that they are warmly welcome and fully included in our school.

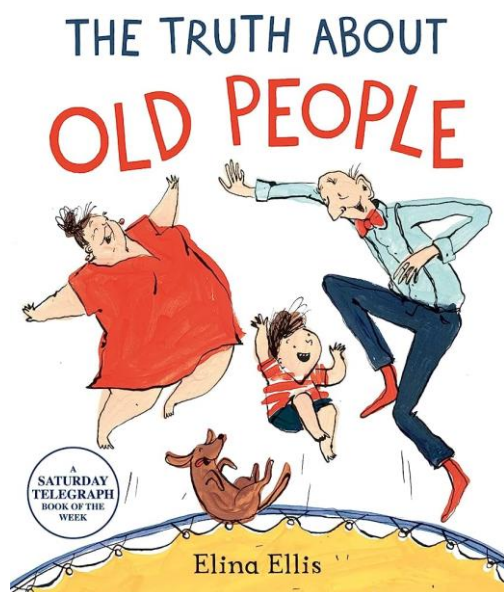
## **Assembly Picturebooks for the Nine Characteristics.**

During a child's school life we estimate that children will encounter maybe three hundred story books. From 'Where the Wild Things Are' and 'The Gruffalo', to 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' and 'Charlotte's Web' and beyond. The vast, vast majority of these books present a world where families have a mum and a dad, where people are white, where most things are 'normal'. We will enjoy using these books with pupils – and we use them a lot. To ensure that we promote understanding of the diversity of the world to our pupils, we sometimes choose to share books that include people representative of the nine protected characteristics.

This is a range of books which we are comfortable sharing with pupils. We intend to ensure each school has the set of these books and we warmly invite parents and carers to come into school to have a look to understand why we are comfortable to share them. The books below are, of course, not all the books that will be shared

### **1. Age**

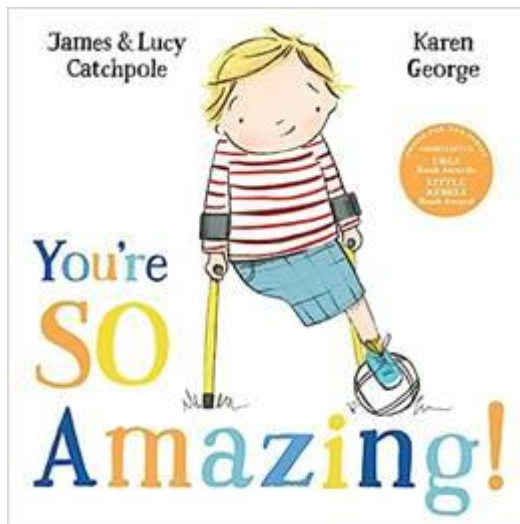
The Truth About Old People – by Elina Ellis



A very funny and lovable picture book tribute to grandparents and older people. When you're small, everybody bigger than you seems really old. But does being older have to mean being boring, or slow, or quiet? This book questions and gently mocks preconceptions about older people. While the text of the book repeats stereotypical ideas – old people are clumsy, old people are scared of new things – the pictures show us something quite different!

## 2. Disability

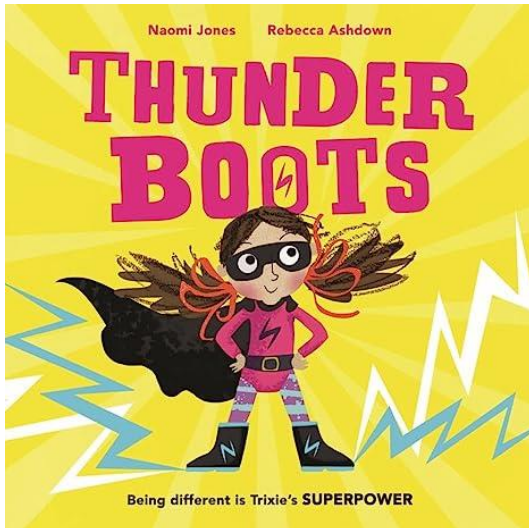
You're SO Amazing by James and Lucy Catchpole, illustrated by Karen George.



Joe loves having fun at the playground with his friends. They can immerse themselves in imagination-fuelled games, speed down slides and dangle off the monkey bars. However, there's a constant stream of on-lookers who insist on viewing one-legged Joe as a source of inspiration. So even when his friend Simone is clearly way better at high-jumping than Joe, or when he's just minding his own business, eating an ice cream (or even just scratching his bottom), it's always Joe who gets noticed and told how amazing he is.

This is a superbly incisive and perfectly pitched picture book about the right of every child to just be an ordinary kid. Those who know Joe don't see him as 'amazing Joe' or 'poor Joe' but rather 'just Joe'. Ironically, it's well-intentioned passers-by and parents who, by their very efforts to include and encourage, in fact insidiously single Joe out.

Thunderboots by Naomi Jones, illustrated by Rebecca Ashdown



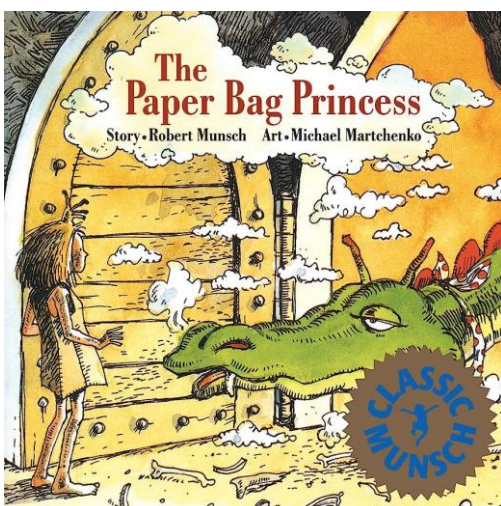
Trixie is the smallest person in Primrose Tower, but also the loudest and the building's residents have given her an affectionate nickname: THUNDERBOOTS.

When it's time for Trixie to start school, she is very excited. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate in class, though. And it's really hard to read letters. Maybe what Trixie needs is a superpowered plan.

An empowering story about starting school with dyslexia that celebrates everyone's differences. This book prompts great conversation from children about how different people think and learn differently and how that's ok.

### 3. Gender

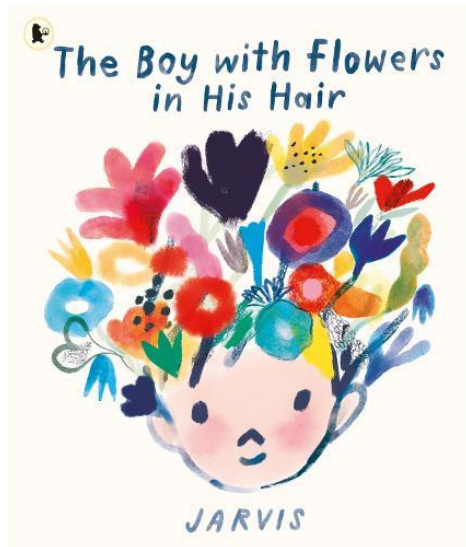
The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munsch, Illustrated by Michael Martchenko



This modern classic about a princess who defeats a dragon and rescues a princess neatly turns a lot of fairytale stereotypes on their head. Children love to point out how it's different from Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty and this can open up conversations about how

girls can be brave and strong just as much as any boy. As well as humorously exploring gender stereotypes, the book is a fun way into thinking critically about what we read.

#### The Boy with Flowers in His Hair by Jarvis



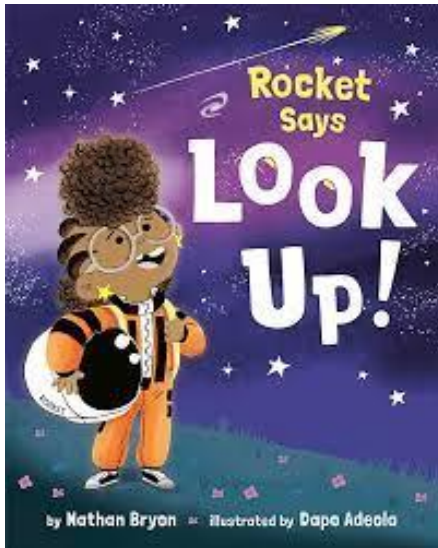
David is the boy with flowers in his hair. He's sweet and gentle, just like his petals. But when David's flowers begin to fall - a single petal at first, then every last blossom - his best friend never leaves his side. And through kindness and creativity, he even finds a way to give David his colour back.

All children will relate to this story of friendship and being there for someone when they really need you. Incidentally, many children might enjoy encountering a boy in a story who is characterised so much as being gentle and kind.

#### **4. Race (ethnicity)**

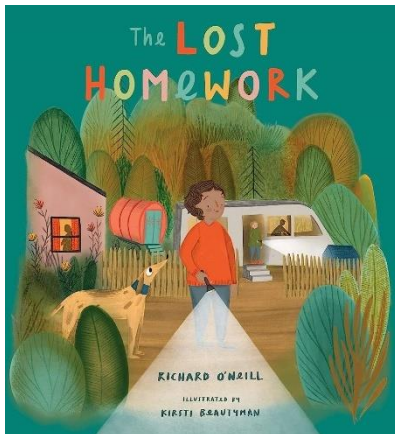
Look Up by Nathan Bryon, illustrated by Dapo Adeola





Look Up is about a little girl called Rocket who is desperate to go to the park to watch a meteor shower. Her brother seems too engrossed in his phone to be much use but his kindness and the loving bond between them really shine through. Race is absolutely incidental in this story – it’s about a keen young scientist and her family relationships but the depiction of Rocket’s family is beautifully done and, without ever labouring the point, overturns limiting assumptions about people of colour.

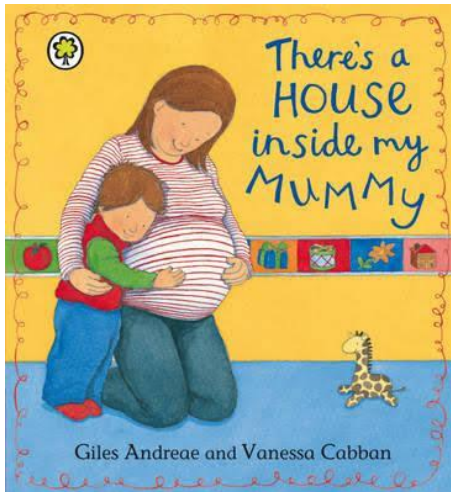
The Lost Homework by Richard O’Neill, illustrated by Kirsti Beautyman



Sonny devotes his weekend to helping his neighbours and fellow Travellers with a variety of tasks. He uses many skills, from calculating the amount of fuel needed for a journey, to restoring a caravan. In fact, the only thing he doesn’t do over the weekend is his homework – his workbook is missing! What will his teacher say? This picture book by Richard O’Neill champions the idea that many skills learned at home are as important as those learned at school. It is a rare example of a book that depicts the lifestyle of travelling people realistically and positively.

4. Pregnancy and Maternity –

There’s a House Inside My Mummy – Giles Andreae and Vanessa Cabban

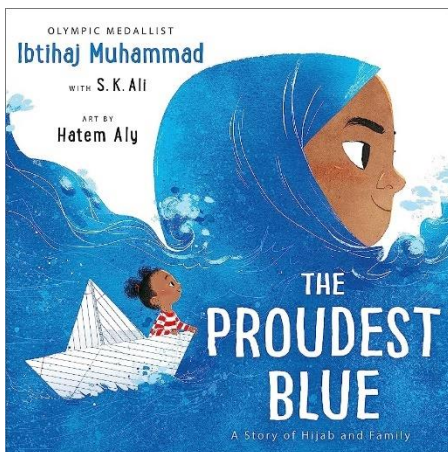


A funny and tender picture book about waiting for a new brother or sister to arrive. This book doesn't seek to answer a child's questions about pregnancy and birth but it does hold a space in which a conversation can happen.

"There's a house inside my mummy where my little brother grows, or maybe it's my little sister No one really knows."

## 6. Religion and Belief

The Proudest Blue by Ibtihaj Muhammed with S.K. Ali, illustrated by Hatem Aly



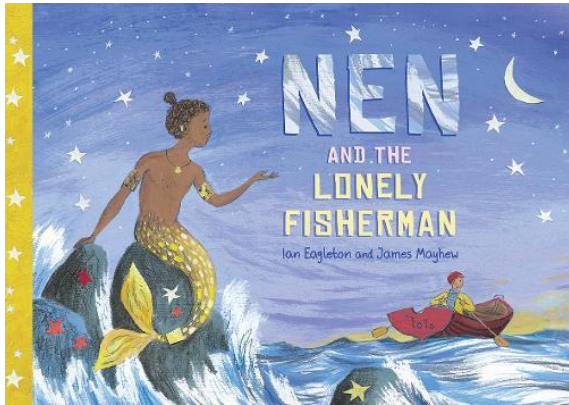
This book challenges assumptions about Islam and, specifically gender in Islam. It's Faizah's first day of school, and her older sister Asiya's first day of hijab – made of a beautiful blue fabric. But not everyone sees hijab as beautiful. In the face of hurtful, confusing words, will Faizah find new ways to be strong?

***'Asiya's hijab is like the ocean and the sky, no line between them, saying hello with a loud wave.'***

The author, Ibtihaj Muhammed, is an Olympic fencer – she competed for America and won a medal – all while wearing her hijab!

## 7. Sexual Orientation

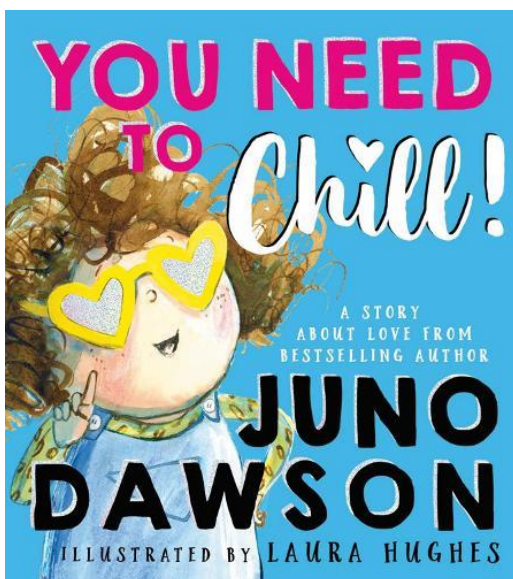
Nen and the Lonely Fisherman by Ian Eagleton, illustrated by James Mayhew



This gentle love story is a flipped version of the Little Mermaid. Nen is a merman and Earnest is a fisherman. Nen’s father, Pelagio, doesn’t want him to mix with the humans and conjures a terrible storm to keep them apart. Earnest nearly drowns but Nen rescues him and they live, we presume, happily ever after. Nen and Earnest have a deep and tender friendship which most young children will accept as just that, other children with a little more insight may choose to read this as the start of a gay relationship and that is fine – just so many fairytales and folktales end with a marriage – but, for most children, the strongest message they take away is that it’s ok to want to be friends with people who aren’t like you. And that’s a very good message indeed.

## 8. Gender Identity or Reassignment

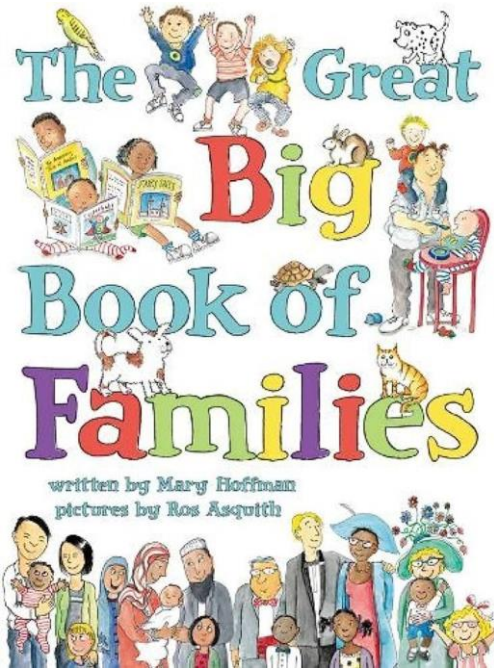
You Need to Chill by Juno Dawson, illustrated by Laura Hughes



The child in this book is a little frustrated when classmates keep asking what has happened to her big brother Bill. Is he on holiday? Has he been eaten by a shark? Has he been taken to Mars by aliens? The answer, we learn at the end of the book is more mundane – Bill prefers to be called Lily now. She’s still clever and funny, and kind and cool, She’s really rather brill. This is shown through the eyes of the younger sibling who is secure and happy in her nuclear family and unthreatened by her elder sibling’s choice.

## 10. Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Great Big Book of Families by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Ros Asquith



This lovely book for poring over and exploring is full of families of every imaginable structure, culture and ethnicity. It always opens up conversations about diversity and gently counters stereotypes. I think that just about every child who looks into this book will find a family structure that looks like theirs and people who resemble members of their families.

We do our very best to select books that are of really good quality – through their writing, their storylines and their illustrations. We try not to choose books where the only feature of interest is the protected characteristic of a main character.

If you have any questions about the content of our teaching of Equality and Diversity and the way that we teach it in schools, please make an appointment to speak to the Principal.