

THEME LESSON — 2017

# All Different, All Equal

## How can difference belong without becoming a target?

**Suitable for:** Upper primary and secondary, adaptable by age

**Time:** 45–60 minutes

**Theme:** Anti-Bullying Week 2017 — All Different, All Equal

**Permanent resource:** Yes

### Learning aims

Pupils will have opportunities to:

- explore difference without treating it as a problem
- consider how groups decide what is “normal”
- examine how difference can become a target for exclusion or bullying
- recognise that equality does not mean everyone being the same
- identify ways groups can make room for difference while keeping everyone safe and included

### Important note for staff

Use fictional examples and avoid asking pupils to disclose personal experiences.

If a safeguarding concern is raised, follow the school’s procedures.

## 1. Different and equal?

Write:

Can people be very different and still be equal?

Invite responses.

Then ask:

What does equal mean here?

Possible answers might include:

- equal worth
- equal right to safety
- equal right to be heard
- equal right to belong
- equal right to be treated fairly

### Key idea

Equality does not require sameness.

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### 2. Who decides what is normal?

Give groups examples such as:

- the way someone speaks
- what they wear
- the music they like
- how confident or quiet they are
- their culture or religion
- disability or neurodivergence
- family background
- interests that are unusual within their peer group

Ask:

**Who decides what counts as normal in a group?**

Then:

**What happens when “different” quietly becomes “less acceptable”?**

### 3. Find the hidden connection

Give each pair or small group two fictional characters who appear very different.

For example:

**One is very sporty and outgoing. The other dislikes sport and prefers drawing.**

Ask groups to find:

- something they may share
- something they may learn from one another
- something that can remain different without needing to change

The purpose is not to prove that everyone is secretly the same.

It is to show that **connection and difference can exist together**.

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### 4. When difference becomes a target

Present:

**A pupil has become known for something that makes them stand out. At first people comment on it. Later the comments become repeated jokes, and eventually other pupils begin joining in.**

Ask:

**What changed?**

Explore:

- repetition
- group permission
- humiliation
- power
- whether the person can opt out
- whether the difference itself is really the problem

#### Key question

**Is the issue the difference, or how people are choosing to respond to it?**

### 5. Equality is not always identical treatment

Give a fictional example:

**Two pupils need different kinds of support in order to take part in the same activity.**

Ask:

**Is that unfair?**

Explore the difference between:

**giving everyone exactly the same thing**

**and**

**giving people what helps them participate safely and fairly.**

This can lead into discussion of accessibility, communication and reasonable adjustments.

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### 6. Change the group response

Give groups one exclusion scenario.

Ask them to create two versions:

**Version A: the group treats difference as a reason to exclude.**

**Version B: the difference remains, but the group response changes.**

Ask:

**What changed in the group?**

Look for:

- curiosity instead of mockery
- boundaries
- inclusion
- someone refusing to join in
- adults challenging stereotypes
- space for different ways of participating

### 7. Final reflection

Complete:

**“Being different should never mean...”**

**“A group becomes more equal when...”**

### Closing message

**Being equal does not mean becoming the same. It means difference does not reduce someone's right to safety, respect, participation or belonging.**

### Follow-up possibilities

This lesson could lead into:

- **Different, Similar, Connected**
- work on stereotypes and assumptions
- accessibility discussion
- peer-support activities
- reviewing whether school activities allow different ways of participating
- exploring discrimination and bullying as related but distinct issues