

STUDENT TEACHER SOCIAL ACTION LETTER

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Disability Awareness in the Foundation Phase: Building an Inclusive Community

Dear Parents, Learners, and Community Members,

At Sunlands Primary, I believe that fostering an environment of inclusivity and empathy is crucial for the growth of all learners. As part of this commitment, I decided to focus on disability awareness in the Foundation Phase, not only to benefit learners with disabilities but to enrich the development of all learners. By teaching children about diversity and inclusion from a young age, we are cultivating a generation that values empathy, respect, and kindness.

The Importance of Disability Awareness

Disability awareness helps learners understand that everyone is unique and that differences, whether physical, sensory, or cognitive, should be embraced. When children learn about disabilities, they become more compassionate and accepting of others, which promotes a positive school culture. Inclusive education benefits both disabled and abled learners by fostering empathy, collaboration, and understanding. Disabled learners gain confidence and self-esteem through increased participation and peer support, while abled learners develop social skills, problem-solving abilities, and leadership as they learn to work with and assist their peers. This approach creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment where everyone feels valued and appreciated.



The Understanding and promoting disability awareness is essential in creating an inclusive and supportive environment for all learners. Here are the key aspects of disability awareness that we focus on at Sunlands Primary:

- **Understanding Different Types of Disabilities:** Disabilities can be physical, sensory (e.g., vision or hearing impairments), cognitive (e.g., learning disabilities), or emotional/behavioural. Teaching children about these different types of disabilities helps to break down stereotypes and create empathy.
- **Challenging Misconceptions:** Disability awareness involves challenging common misconceptions. It's important for learners to understand that having a disability does not mean someone is less capable. Everyone has different strengths, and it is these differences that make our community diverse and vibrant.
- **Promoting Inclusive Language:** Using respectful and inclusive language is a critical part of disability awareness. Learners are encouraged to avoid negative or harmful terms and instead focus on words that promote dignity and respect, such as "person with a disability" rather than defining someone solely by their disability.
- **Encouraging Active Inclusion:** Disability awareness goes beyond understanding—it's about action. We encourage learners to actively include their peers with disabilities in group activities, games, and learning experiences. Inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate, no matter their abilities.
- **Recognizing Barriers:** Learners are taught to recognize the barriers that people with disabilities may face, whether they are physical (like stairs without ramps) or social (like exclusion from group activities). Recognizing these barriers allows learners to think critically about how they can be part of the solution, making the school environment more accessible for everyone.
- **Fostering Empathy and Respect:** A fundamental part of disability awareness is cultivating empathy and respect for others. Through various activities and discussions, learners are encouraged to imagine what it might be like to live with a disability and how they can help create a more compassionate environment.
- **Celebrating Diversity:** Disability awareness emphasizes that diversity, including disability, is something to be celebrated. By understanding and appreciating the differences in others, learners grow into more well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society.

These key aspects help to shape our approach to disability awareness at Sunlands Primary, ensuring that every learner is equipped with the tools to be kind, inclusive, and respectful of all members of the community.

Ways Learners Can Show Disability Awareness at School

Encouraging learners to actively participate in creating an inclusive environment benefits everyone. Here are a few ways they can show disability awareness:

- **Be a Friend:** Learners can make an effort to include children with disabilities in their games and activities.
- **Communicate Respectfully:** Teach learners to be patient and respectful when interacting with peers who may communicate or move differently.
- **Assist When Needed:** Offering help to a classmate with a disability, such as holding open a door or assisting in group work, shows care and thoughtfulness.
- **Celebrate Differences:** Encourage learners to celebrate achievements and milestones of all classmates, recognizing that everyone learns and grows at their own pace.

How Parents and Community Members Can Support Disability Awareness

The role of parents and the wider community is essential in reinforcing the values of empathy and inclusion that learners are taught at school. By modelling positive behavior at home and in public spaces, you can help build the character and etiquette needed to foster a truly inclusive environment.

Here are some ways you can contribute:

- **Discuss Disability at Home:** Talk openly with your child about different types of disabilities and emphasize the importance of treating everyone with kindness and respect. Reading books or watching videos about people with disabilities can also help raise awareness.
- **Encourage Empathy and Patience:** Help your child understand that some people may need more time to do certain things, and that's okay. Reinforce the value of being patient and understanding in all interactions.
- **Get Involved in Community Initiatives:** Participate in or support local initiatives focused on disability awareness. Whether it's attending a workshop or volunteering with organizations that assist disabled individuals, community involvement helps build understanding.
- **Model Inclusive Behavior:** Children often mimic what they see. By treating everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of their abilities, you are setting a powerful example for your child.
- **Support School Initiatives:** Stay informed about school programs promoting disability awareness and offer your support, whether through volunteering or attending events. Your involvement helps reinforce the message of inclusion.

A Community That Cares

Together, we can create a school environment where every learner, regardless of ability, feels safe, valued, and supported. Disability awareness is not just about recognising differences but celebrating the strengths that each individual brings to our community. It is therefore crucial for us to work hand-in-hand to nurture a culture of respect, inclusion, and understanding, ensuring that Sunlands Primary continues to be a place where all learners can thrive.

Warm regards,
Abubakr Daniels a student teacher at Sunlands Primary School.

