Protected Characteristics Mapping

Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education

Inspecting teaching of the Protected Characteristics in schools

How do Ofsted inspect the teaching of the protected characteristics in schools?

Inspectors will gather evidence on how schools promote equality and pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics. They will use this evidence as part of evaluating and coming to judgements on 3 main areas:

- The personal development of pupils
- The effectiveness of leadership and management; from the summer term 2021, how the school meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE)'s statutory guidance on relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education ('the DfE's statutory guidance') will contribute to this
- For non-association independent schools, whether the school meets the Independent School Standards (ISS); this also informs the judgement about the effectiveness of its leadership and management.

If inspectors identify at inspection that a school is not teaching about all the protected characteristics, they will always report on this and will explain how (if at all) it has affected the school's inspection judgements.

Personal development in more detail:

The education inspection framework (EIF), the school inspection handbook, and the independent school inspection handbook explain that pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics and how equality and diversity are promoted form part of the evidence that inspectors use to evaluate the school's personal development of pupils.

Schools are not required to teach about all the protected characteristics in every year group; that is a matter for the school to decide, and how it plans its curriculum. However, the curriculum should be planned and delivered so that children develop age-appropriate knowledge and understanding during their time at the school.

There are a range of ways schools can choose to teach about these issues in an age-appropriate way. Primary schools could, for example, teach pupils about the different types of family groups that exist within society. As stated in the DfE's statutory guidance, teaching on these matters should be integrated appropriately into the curriculum, rather than addressed separately or in one-off lessons.

Note on LGBTQ+

From the summer term 2021, if a primary school does not teach about LGBT relationships, this will not have an impact on the leadership and management judgement if the school can satisfy inspectors that it has still fulfilled the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance. If it cannot do this, for example if it has failed to consult with parents, inspectors will consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. For state-funded schools, this only applies to section 5 inspections. For independent schools, this only applies to standard inspections. The school will not ordinarily receive a judgement for this better than requires improvement.

To read the full Ofsted guidance click here

Roary Pownall gives his thoughts on protected characteristics in schools

There are three myths about the teaching of the Protected Characteristics in schools which should be firmly dismissed.

Firstly, that school leaders and staff often assume the idea of teaching pupils about the Protected Characteristics is a significant additional burden. It isn't. Secondly, the solution is to be found in a series of several separate lessons in, say, Year 6. It isn't. Thirdly, that Ofsted have a secret checklist to test out the quality of what's happening in your school, perhaps even with a sliding scale where the more groups your pupils can name, the higher the grade they'll award. They don't.

This is because teaching should be integrated into your PSHE and/or wider personal development programme, so when teachers cover content about families, it should include teaching them the idea of different kinds of family, and how what matters is love and kindness; when teachers explain about men and women, how sometimes women are treated less fairly; when teaching about LGBT+ people (if your primary school teaches about this group explicitly), how being part of this group may cause some people to bully them or treat them less well; when talking about disability, how people can often make assumptions, or not make a reasonable adjustment to help people who are disabled; when talking about people of different races, how they are often treated unfavourably – and so on. And that all of this is wrong. Pupils should be learning that no-one should be given less respect just because of the group, or groups, they are in.

Moreover, teaching about the Protected Characteristics is not just about what happens in PSHE lessons. It should, can, and may already, be included as part of other curriculum subjects such as, for example, RE and history. This would mean, for example, teachers explaining to pupils who are studying the ancient Greeks that the Spartans abandoned any babies identified as having a disability, and that this was considered necessary by a society in very different circumstances (such as the threat of war with neighbouring city states, and scarcity of food) but today would be considered brutally cruel to a specific group of people. Ditto the different attitudes to women in different religions globally in RE.

All this should be done with the aim of helping pupils to accept themselves for who they are, and how to understand, and have empathy with, people with different characteristics. It is whether pupils are learning about the moral importance of treating everyone equally, regardless of the group they belong to.

It will be clear to anyone that not only can this teaching begin in the early years, but that it is almost certainly already happening in your school. The first time that children are encouraged to think of differences between people, and treating them kindly, this is teaching about the Protected Characteristics. It's just being aware that it is, and being happy to explain it. Of course, the older children get, the more they can be taught about it. It's reasonable for the older pupils in primary schools (Y6, and probably Y5) to be able to know some of the groups who are not always treated fairly. They may well have learned the word 'prejudice'. Pupils may surprise you. Girls in these year groups are often able to tell visitors that they've learned in history how, for example, women didn't used to have the right to vote and were taught needlework at school because they weren't thought by men to be clever enough. Now things are better, they explain, but women are still not always treated equally!

None of this requires additional lessons. Though there's nothing wrong with planning them, you're not expected to do this. What is the most important is being able to show intentional, incremental development of pupils being taught how everyone's different, and that everyone is worthy of respect, no matter what group they belong to. As they grow, your school helping them to learn how people can be different; that certain groups people belong to often causes some other people to be unkind to them; and that this isn't fair or respectful.

Roary Pownall, PSHE Specialist

Roary Pownall became one of His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in 2016 and retired at the end of May 2023. As part of the Curriculum Unit, he was Ofsted's subject lead for Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE), Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) and for Citizenship. He is a passionate advocate for personal development and has especial interest in the development of pupils' character.

How can 1decision support your school to teach the protected characteristics?

1decision provides a kitemarked framework for PSHE which includes additional content such as British values, protective behaviours, statutory Relationship and Health Education, and protected characteristics.

Together, this content supports you in evidencing personal development for every pupil.

The table below has been created to highlight the areas within the programme which subtly and explicitly link to the protected characteristics and the Equality Act 2010.

If you have any further questions, please contact our team via info@1decision.co.uk

Protected Characteristic	Definition	Explicit links to the protected characteristics & the Equality Act 2010	Is this protected characteristic subtly threaded throughout the content?
Age	The length of time that a person has lived, or a thing has existed.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** Throughout the topics, pupils will take part in many age-related discussions and activities such as; age-appropriate computer apps, legal responsibilities, how responsibilities change as we grow, puberty and menstruation, stages of pregnancy, and more. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same? Celebrating Differences
Gender reassignment	Individuals who wish to live permanently in a different gender from their sex at birth. Some individuals may undergo medical and surgical treatment to alter the body.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics **Important note:** Gender reassignment is mentioned in relation to the Equality Act, but it is not covered in detail. Please review this content to ensure that it is suitable for your setting.	**NO**

Being married or in a civil partnership	A legally or formally recognised union of two people as partners in a personal relationship.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** Throughout the topics pupils will take part in several activities and discussion which look at marriage and civil partnership, such as growing up in our world, different families, same sex marriage, conception, and more. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same? Celebrating Differences
Being pregnant or on maternity leave	The period during pregnancy and shortly after childbirth.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** During the 'Conception' topic, pupils will learn about the different stages of pregnancy. Parents/Carers of primary aged children can withdraw their child from this topic.
Disability	A physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.	Protected Characteristics assembly Celebrating Differences assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Breaking Down Barriers, Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	YES During the 'Breaking Down Barriers' topic (A World Without Judgement 8-11 module), pupils will learn more about disability and the laws in place to protect those who are disabled. Pupils will also have opportunities to look at inclusivity within discussions and activities across all topics. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same?

Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin	Any one of the groups that human beings are often divided into based on physical traits or ancestry.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** Throughout our programme we have included a range of actors and photographs to support inclusivity to help all children feel represented. There are consistent opportunities to explore beliefs and religions and we encourage pupils to understand that we are all special and unique and we should always embrace our differences. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same? Celebrating Differences
Religion/ belief, or lack of religion/ belief	A particular system of faith and worship.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** Throughout our programme we have included a range of actors and photographs to support inclusivity to help all children feel represented. There are consistent opportunities to explore beliefs and religions and we encourage pupils to understand that we are all special and unique and we should always embrace our differences. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same? Celebrating Differences
Sex	The state of being male or female.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** During all topics our characters are referred to as male or female. Schools can decide if they would like to expand on conversations in regards to differnt genders. Our 'Covering LGBTQ+' guidance, will provide you with more support if required. **Assembly Portal Links** Are We the Same? Celebrating Differences

Sexual orientation	Who you're attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually.	Protected Characteristics assembly **A World Without Judgment module (8-11):** Inclusion and Acceptance & British Values topics	**YES** During all topics our characters are referred to as male or female. Schools can decide if they would like to expand on conversations. Our 'Covering LGBTQ+' guidance, will provide you with more support if required. **Assembly Portal Links**

Top Tips for the Classroom

Teaching and promoting equality and diversity in the classroom should offer pupils the safe space to discuss and explore their opinions and challenge their perception of the world around them.

Here are some top tips to promote equality and diversity in the classroom:

1. Be aware of humour and jokes amongst pupils as these may be derogatory around stereotypes and should be challenged.
2. Challenge negative attitudes.
3. Use a range of resources which reflect the diversity of your students.
4. Ensure resources are always non-sexist, non-racist, and non-discriminatory.
5. Incorporate differing learning styles when possible.
6. Adapt resources for SEN pupils wherever possible.
7. When dividing the class into groups consider mixing genders, different abilities, religious backgrounds, and other differences within your cohort.

Raising awareness that all individuals should be treated equally and fairly helps to support moral and social attitudes, positively shaping your pupils lives now and in the future.

If you require any further support contact our team via info@1decision.co.uk