

# The Right to Be Different

Children have a right to be different. Many children have a physical or mental **disability** that makes life very challenging. They deserve care and respect from others. In the past, people with disabilities were treated differently and often very badly. Fortunately, in the last few decades, laws have been passed to protect people with disabilities.

In the United Kingdom, the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, clamped down on discrimination based on disability. This paved the way for physical changes to public places, such as creating wheelchair ramps in restaurants. It also required that provision be made to give physically disabled people access to schools and colleges. The Act also regulates public transport and the employment of people with disabilities.

SCOPE is an organisation that seeks to achieve equality for people with disabilities. It set up a project called “In the Picture”, which promotes the inclusion of disabled children in early years’ picture books. Children’s author, Dame Jacqueline Wilson supports the work of SCOPE, saying: “I think it’s very important to include disabled children in books in an ordinary, everyday kind of way. I feel that they should be simply part of the story, as characters in their own right – funny, friendly, feisty downright naughty, whatever!” ([www.childreninthepicture.org.uk](http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk))



Children with disabilities have the right to take part in mainstream school activities. Some schools have special units attached to them so that children can receive specialist education but can also take part in the regular curriculum with other children of the same age. This is beneficial to both disabled and non-disabled children.

The *dis-* prefix is often attached to a word to express its opposite, as in *ability/disability*. Other *dis-* words are *dislike*, *disobedient* and *disloyal*. Other prefixes that form opposites include *un-*, *in-*, *im-*, *non-*, *il-* and *ir-*.



One of the educational aims for children with intellectual disabilities is to give them life skills so that they can become independent adults. These young people in China attend a special school for children with intellectual disabilities. They are having a sewing lesson.

## Children’s Rights for Different Abilities?

The Government Department for Education and Skills requires schools to make special provision for gifted and talented children. They are concerned that unless special teaching is put in place gifted learners will not achieve to their full potential. Do you think that only children with disabilities have the right to special education?