

Welcoming a child with a Lower Limb Difference

INTO YOUR SCHOOL



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Types of limb Difference

UPPER OR LOWER LIMB

Your best source of information here are parents, they are the ones who have been supporting their child and know exactly what they need help with and when they need to be left to get on with whatever they are doing. It's a learning curve for both of you. Parents have to learn to let go and this means removing a layer of 'protection' for their child - they are effectively handing this over to you and will welcome questions. You won't be seen as being interfering but as caring so ask away - they are the experts and will be keen to share with you. They will also be scared and worried (the same as any parent when their child starts school but with an added layer of worry!)

There are so many limb differences it would be impossible to describe them all here, just go with what parents are telling you and ask the children themselves as they know what they can do on their own and what they may need some support with at first.

I want the teacher to call me or ask me if they are not sure how to adapt something

LimbBo parent



Before

The child starts school



Talk to the child face to face and if staffing allows then visit in their home environment as this will allow you to see how the child functions at home.

By watching the child in their home environment you will notice that the parent will allow their child space to do things in their own way - sometimes the hardest thing to do is to sit back and allow the child to do things as your instinct will be to help'

Let us visit all of the places that he will need to access so that we can check whether there will be any barriers before he arrives. There may be barriers that aren't obvious and we really just want to support you and our child



How do I refer to the child's limb difference



Having worked with various teachers one of the questions that was asked by all of them is about what language they should use when talking about a child's limb difference.

As with everything else in this booklet, the best way to find out is to ask the child themselves or ask parents at your first meeting.



The medical terminology when talking about a lower limb difference is to refer to the child's 'residual limb'. Obviously, this is a bit of a mouthful for children and many of our children refer to their 'stump', 'stumpy' or 'leggy'. However, this is a key thing to find out when first meeting families as they may have their own way of referring to their lower limb difference, their prosthetic, and unaffected limbs.

Quotes from parents

As a parent I would say “don't treat her any differently, but be there to recognise when a little adaptation/help is needed and keep us updated and informed”

W's school have been amazing at adapting PE so the whole class do the same and he doesn't feel singled out. Part of the sports day race was crawling, he's rapid on all fours with no legs on so this put him back on an even playing field!

His limb difference is a part of him, and I want him to be proud of it, but it's not his whole identity. I want his friends and teachers to get to know him without the limb difference being all that they see.

Be aware that some children have different prosthetics for different activities, often referred to as activity prosthetics



Practical activities

PE



It's almost impossible to cover every type of lower limb difference and every child's attitude towards PE. Some will love it and try anything, adapting their way of doing things as they go along. Some will shy away from it as it makes them feel as if their difference is emphasised more in PE than in any other lesson. There is no easy answer to this - ask the parents, talk to the child- even at the age of 4 or 5 they will know what they are capable of doing. Open communication is key here.



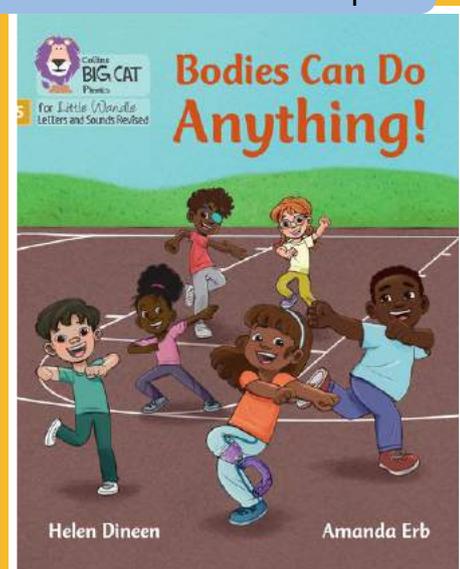
Inclusion



“ My daughter struggles with sometimes sitting crossed legs on the floor especially in assembly so she only has to ask and they will give her a chair even if its half way through ”



Have some books and toys showing limb difference or that talk about differences in general in your book corner, Collins Big Cat phonics books have examples



Prosthetics & Aids

Children with a lower limb difference could have a range of prosthetics. This depends on the type of limb difference that they have - it could be through hip, above knee, through knee or below knee and obviously each type of prosthetic will be tailored to the specific child.

Children with a lower limb difference may need help with their prosthetic - taking it off and putting it on, straightening it if it becomes twisted or cleaning it inside if need be. Again the parents are your best guide and can talk you through this.

Some lower limb different children may use a wheelchair at times - is your school accessible for them?

“

Make sure that School is prepared for any eventuality, for example if S wakes up in the morning in a lot of pain with her leg she is able to go in her wheelchair without us letting school know to be prepared for that.

”



Lower Limb Difference surgery

There are a whole range of lower limb differences but this isn't the place for us to describe all of them. Parents will be able to tell you the medical name for their child's limb difference and sites such as www.stepsworldwide.org will have more information should you want to have a deeper understanding.



What you do need to be aware of is that the child joining you may have already had to undergo surgery. This could be minor, several surgeries, leg lengthening or even amputation. Again, its impossible to cover all types of surgery as each child is an individual and their treatment will vary.



“ If there's anything you're not sure on, even after they have been in your class for a while, the parent won't mind if you ask. ”

Some children require multiple surgeries over time which will leave them out of school for a while, every child recovers differently and therefore there is no set time frame for when they will be able to return to school. Keep in contact with parents and in the meantime small amounts of school work can be sent home if the child feels able to do it.



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Be understanding about hospital appointments as sometimes these can take hours and can be very draining for the child and can be weekly for a while whilst new legs are being made and sometimes the child is just too tired and drained to go back to school afterwards.

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What to expect?

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Be accommodating with school uniform, for example S is unable to wear proper school trousers as they limit her leg movement so school allow her to wear leggings as long as they are inkeeping with the school dress code

”

“

Mobility is going to vary, from making amazing progress to barely being able to wear their prosthesis as they grow and stop fitting properly. It's a constant roller coaster!

”

“

They might need a private space that they can go to to make adjustments to their prosthetic. (they might have to take their trousers off and not want to do that in front of peers).

”



Parent comments

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An Occupational Therapist can advise on accessibility and on how school activities might need to be adapted to include everyone, involving parents too.

”

“

He is very confident with active play, he has no problem accessing anything at soft play or the park. Playing in open spaces is harder for him as he can't run as fast as others his age so gets left behind.

”

“

He is so used to falling over that he just gets up and carries on, even if he's hurt himself. So he might need someone to check that he's ok.

”

“

As a parent I would say that S can do more than anyone would think and that will amaze you, be mindful but don't hold her back, if she wants to try then let her

”



Books



**specifically about
limb difference**

**Limb different character
but not solely about
limb difference**

**Generic books about
difference and equality**

- What happened to you & You are awesome - James Catchpole
- Airick Flies High - Eric Gaffney
- Different is Awesome - Ryan Haack
- The Abilities in me - Limb Difference Gemma Keir
- When Charlie met Emma - Amy Webb
- Uniquely me - Trace Wilson

- Gracie Fairshaw & the mysterious guest - Susan Brownrigg (older readers)
- The Roller Coaster Ride - David Broadbent
- Splash! - Clare Cashmore
- Chops series - Matthew Jenkins
- Rae's first Day - Danny Jordan
- Phantom Castle - Charlotte Middleton
- Going Viral - James Catchpole - released in 2024

Some of these
books are about
upper limb
difference

- All about diversity - Felicity Brooks & Mar Ferrero
- The perfect fit - Naomi and James Jones
- It's ok to be different - Sharon Purtill
- Know me by my name - Kirsty Webb
- Marmaduke the very different dragon - Rachel Valentine & Ed Eaves

<https://literacytree.com/a-book-list-for-books-with-positive-images-of-neurodiversity-or-disability/>

James Catchpole

Karen George



What Happened to YOU?



Collins BIG CAT

Going Viral

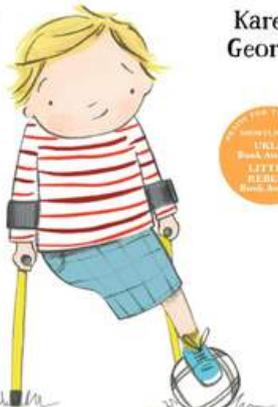
James Catchpole
Jennifer Latham Robinson



Representation helps to normalise limb difference

James & Lucy Catchpole

Karen George



THE FIRST LITTLE REBELS BOOK AWARD

You're SO Amazing!

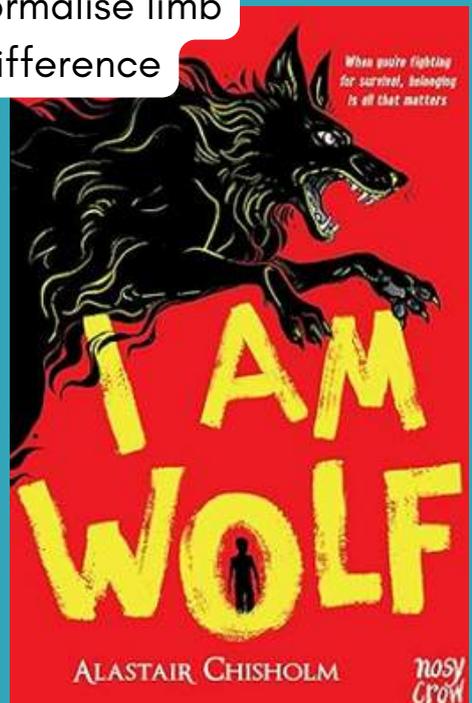
Collins BIG CAT Presents
5 for Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised

Bodies Can Do Anything!



Helen Dineen

Amanda Erb



Checklist

- Home visit
- How to refer to limb difference
- Lunch - equipment
- What do they want help with
- PE Equipment and changing
- Accessibility for wheelchair use
- Inclusion - books
- Prosthetic care
- What questions do you have?



This is for you and the family to decide upon together - its meant to be helpful not add lots of work so use it how you feel its appropriate!

**I don't want
him to be
influenced by
other people
being negative
about it.
Everybody's
different and
that's OK**





Team LimbBo



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