

Welcoming a child with a Limb Difference

INTO YOUR SCHOOL



info@limbbofoundation.co.uk





The fact that you are reading this means that you either have a child with a limb difference in your school or one that is about to join you. You may well be apprehensive about how this will work. How will other children react? How much, if any, extra support will this child need?

Hopefully, this book will put your mind at rest and be able to preempt some of your questions.

This book isn't a list of dos and don'ts, it's just our way of trying to raise awareness of some of the issues that you may encounter and offering ways that will make life easier for both you as the teacher and the child with a limb difference that you will be supporting.

We've included quotes from children, parents and teachers which you will hopefully find useful.

If you have any questions that you think we might be able to answer or if you just want a chat please get in touch.


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Types of limb Difference

UPPER OR LOWER LIMB

Your best support 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, they 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



Hints and comments from teachers who already have a limb different child in their class

“

Don't underestimate your limb different child. We quickly realised Tommy didn't need our help with the things that we thought would be challenging for him. Our offers of help were often met with 'I can do it'. He would ask for help if needed and we adjusted our offers of help accordingly.

”

“

We walked through dinner time with our pupil who wanted to carry some of her own cutlery and plates etc. A smaller tray helped with this

“

Discuss with parents how the independence of the child can be considered and brief ALL staff on this - e.g not all children want help with their coats or opening packets

”

“

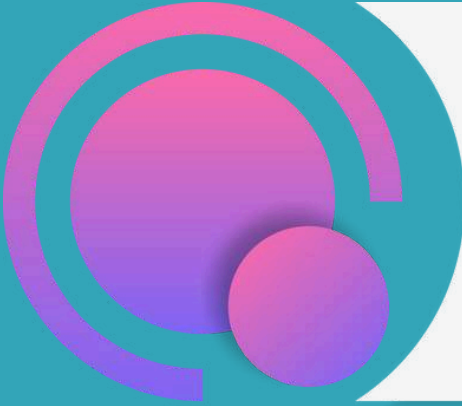
I feel like I'm not going to break him now he is so much tougher than I imagined

”




Before


The child starts school



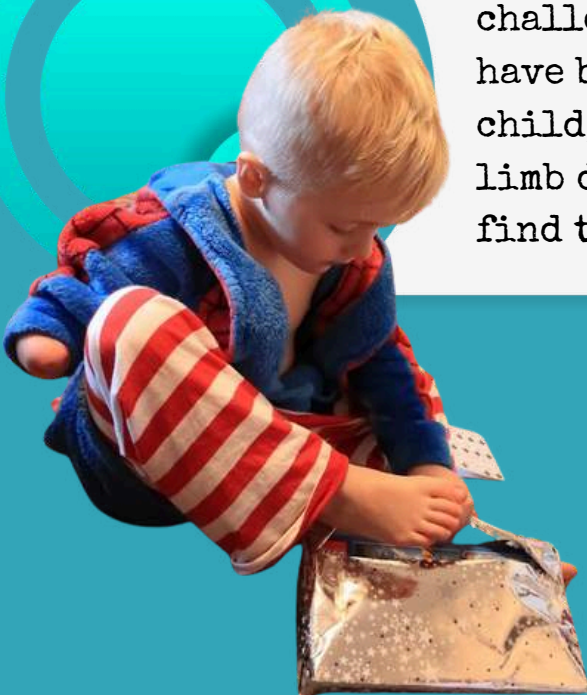
Talk to the child face to face and if staffing allows then visit in their home environment as this will allow you to see how the child functions at home.



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'



Allow the parents to ask questions, it's challenging for them to 'let go' as they have been the one supporting their child, answering questions about their limb difference and helping them to find their own way of doing things.



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.



Many children refer to their limb different arm as their 'little arm' or their 'born arm'. Some refer to it as a 'baby arm' or a 'special arm' there are lots of variations - again you need to be led by the child in this. The only thing we would ask is that you don't allow others to refer to it as 'their poorly arm' or something that implies their arm has something wrong with it - its just different not damaged.

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”

Inclusion is everything to us. You may worry they can't do it but watch them show you how they do it their way. It might look different but it works for them. And also my child knows nothing else. They don't feel broken its just how they where born and they want to do like anyone else.

My H who is also missing his left hand will start school in September too. He is at preschool with most of the kids that he goes up with and they don't even notice it anymore. To begin with a lot asked questions and touched his arm sometimes but he just tells people it's the way it grew and they just carry on. I'm just going to play it by ear and if anything comes up address it as and when xx



Practical activities

PE



PE is one of the areas where you may need to take advice from parents and modify activities to allow the limb different child to take part. Sometimes these modifications are very minor but we've added a few points to think about, and hopefully by building a sense of trust the child will soon be able to tell you what modifications they need.

Getting changed

Most limb different parents are quite savvy and will have bought adaptable clothing – although the artex shirt has buttons like everyone else is wearing, it's likely to have velcro underneath the buttons to allow it to be pulled open easily. In the same way, shoes and pumps will have velcro fastenings and trousers will be elastic waisted – maybe add this to your checklist of questions

Peer support

Peer support can be invaluable. if you look at the photograph above – Isabelle was running in the modern equivalent of the egg and spoon race – they had agreed with the teacher that her friend could run alongside her and pick up the bean bag if she dropped it

Adaptations

Consider PE adaptations by looking at any physical equipment to be used eg climbing frames., raquets, ropes and see if these need any modifications.

Easy 'wins' for supporting

THAT YOU MAYBE HADN'T
THOUGHT OF ...



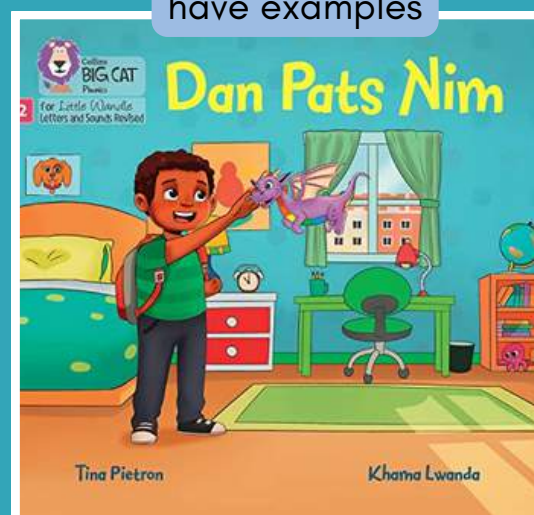
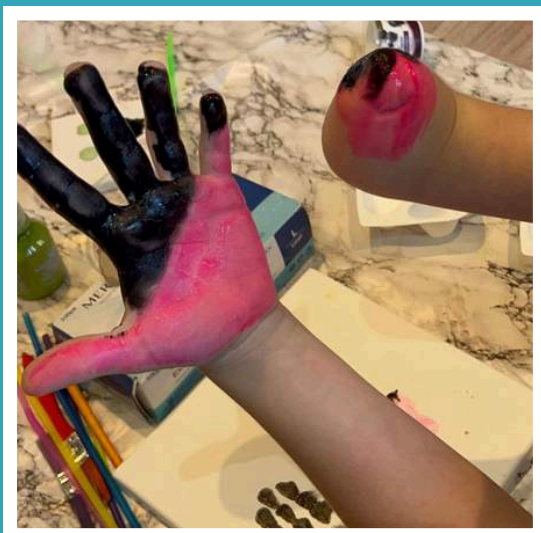
Adding up to ten and showing the answer by holding fingers up?
Easy ways – cards? an artists' drawing hand? A cardboard hand?

If you are starting to write and encourage children to use finger spacing, consider alternatives – a lolly stick with a face drawn on, Tommy's dad 3D printed a finger spacer for him.

If you are primary, especially early years, don't avoid hand printed cards at Christmas etc – let the child paint their hand and their little arm – please don't get another child to paint their hand and add that – it will just upset children and yes we have had that happen several times.

Consider how you help the child secure paper and books when writing. Also bear in mind a child may be missing the hand that would have been their dominate hand so their writing will an extra challenge

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



Prosthetics & Aids

UPPER LIMB DIFFERENCE - CHOICE

LOWER LIMB - NECESSARY MOST OF THE TIME

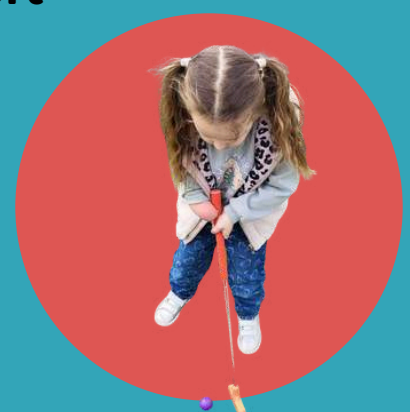
By the time they start school most of our children will be confident in using their prosthetic as and when they need it. Many children won't use one at all.

Children with a lower limb difference may need help with their prosthetic – taking it off and putting it on or cleaning it inside if need be BUT again the parents are your best guide and can talk you through this.

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



**Engaged
in sport**



Lunchtime

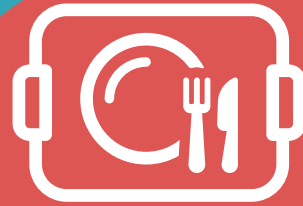
TRAYS, CUTLERY AND...



SPORK



www.lightmyfire.com



Tray-ease of holding
& carrying



Be aware that some children may look as if their method of eating is uncomfortable BUT it will be the way that they have worked out is easiest for them.

B 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

- 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?

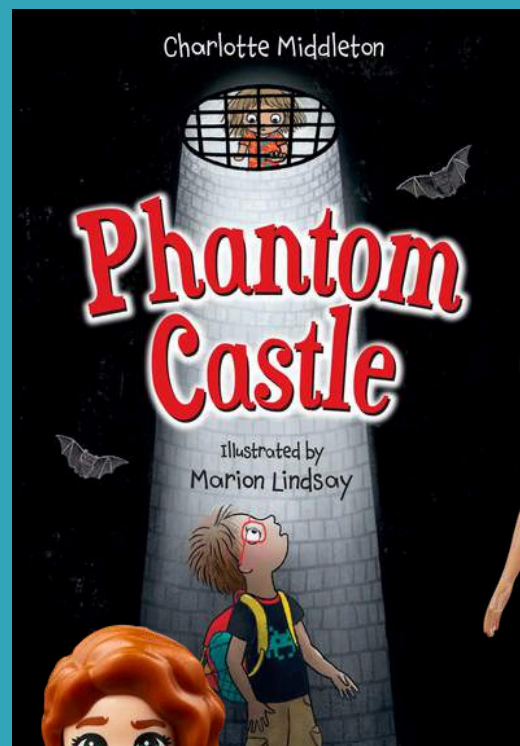
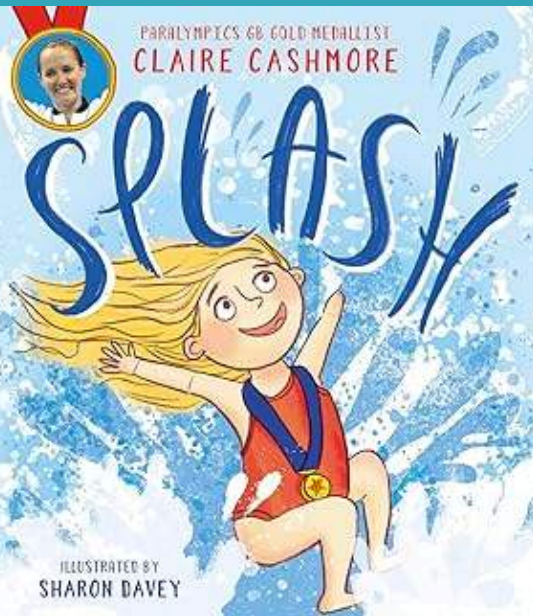
Collins
BIG CAT
Phonics
5 For Little Wandle
Letters and Sounds Revised

Bodies Can Do Anything!



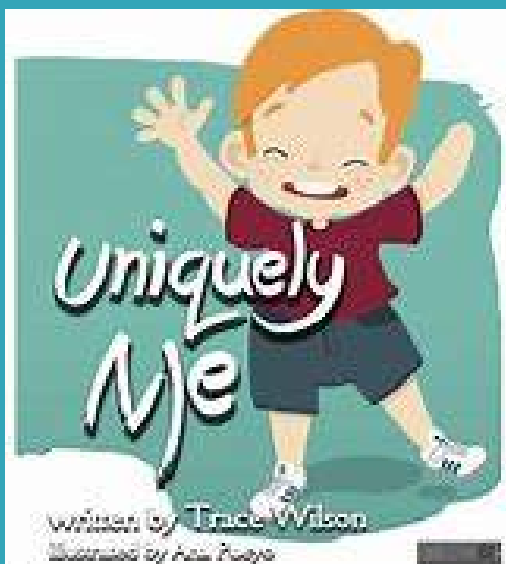
Helen Dineen

Amanda Erb



Autumn –
lego figure
with a limb
difference.

Representation helps
to normalise limb
difference



Questions?



PREEMPT OR NOT?

This booklet was a response to the frequent requests that we get from parents who are worrying about their child starting school and asking for advice. The replies below are to give you a feel of how our parents reacted

Hi all, our little boy C was born missing his left hand, he is due to start primary school in September and looking for any experience or advice anyone has, did you post anything on Parents' groups. I wonder if it would help C avoid endless questions?

After a couple of weeks N came home saying everyone was always asking him questions - I asked if the teachers could do something to almost tell everyone at the same time about his limb difference.

Personally, I would be led by whatever C wants to do. Let him go and experience it and then decide if anything needs to be done

We have a couple of books about limb difference which she can take in and they can read as a class

Our little H started last year and we didn't feel it necessary to say anything. I feel like he is going to have to go through life with people asking questions and he has to learn to accept it & it doesn't define who he is anyway.

Obviously, the kids asked questions to start with but we explained this would happen and he just said, 'I was born this way, my mum says I'm special'

Don't worry, I stressed too, it will all be fine.

Honestly don't worry we have all been there with the worry, I was the same! If I knew now how things would be I could have saved myself so much stress'

Useful tools



Mounted table top scissors

www.yourkoalaa.com
soft prosthetics with
different attachments



www.activehands.com

scissors



Card Holder

New



Easi-Grip Scissors



Long Loop Scissors

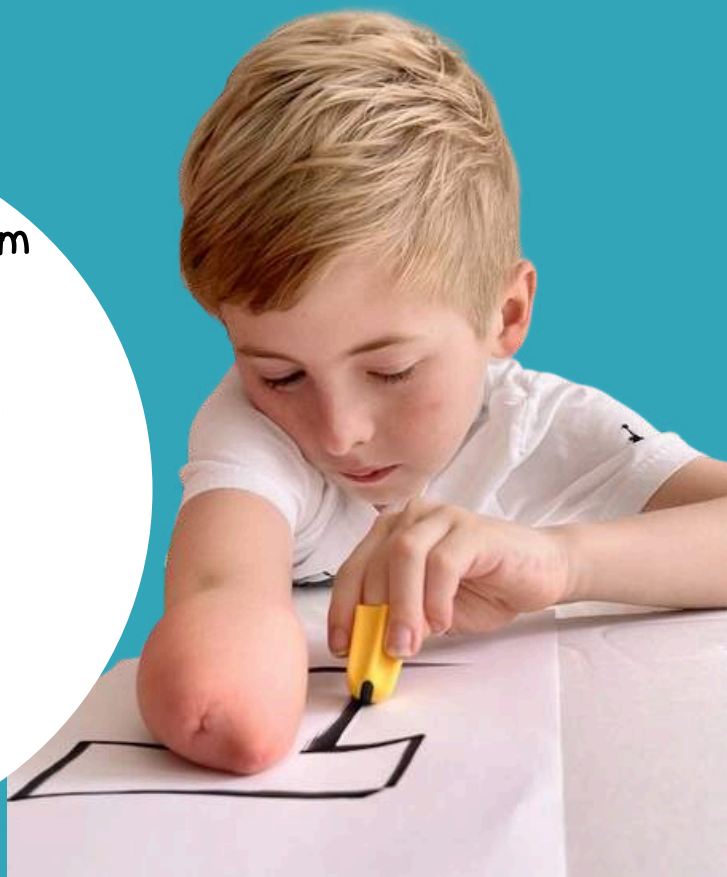


Table Top Scissors

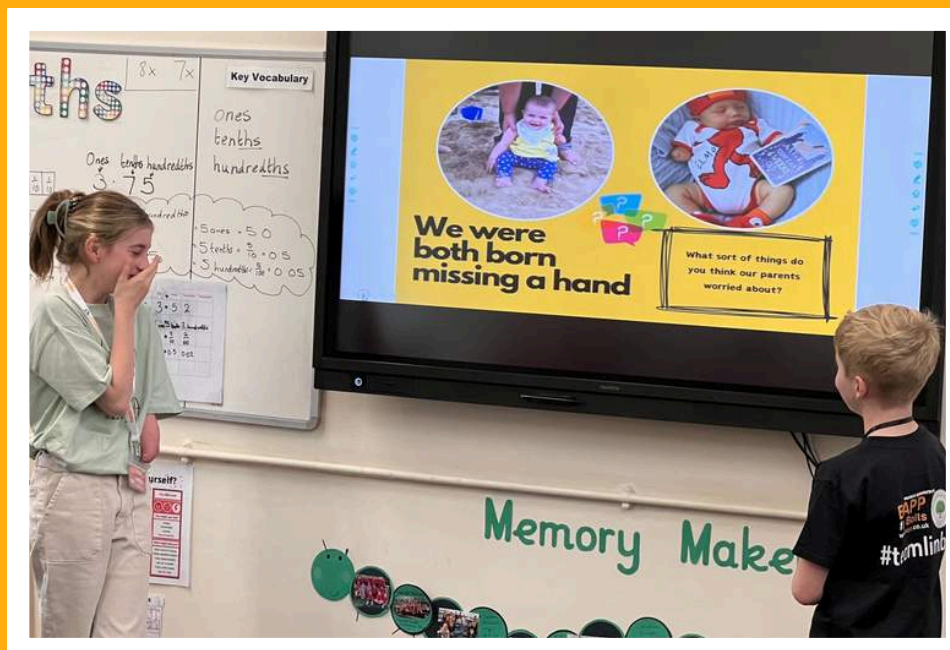
10% OFF

LimbBo10

www.activehands.com



Although this booklet is aimed at children starting school Lottie, one of our young ambassadors, was moving schools so we took the opportunity to go into her new school and talk to her new class. In order to support her Tommy came with us and we spent time explaining their stories and asking them what questions they might have. The questions were anonymous and written on post it notes – we explained this was a safe space to ask any questions they wanted so that Lottie could explain everything once and then revert to being just Lottie not the girl with one hand.



The class were lovely, their questions were honest and varied. We had lots of laughs and everyone was left feeling reassured – Lottie's limb difference was no longer the 'elephant in the room' and i'm sure she will settle in well.

You will find once the child with a limb difference has been with you a few weeks that the other children won't see them as different just as another classmate.

Although as a note our older children do say that the beginning of the year is hard as the new children joining school will stare and ask questions as it's new to them!



Questions asked by yr 5 pupils

PRACTICAL

Can you ride a bike?

How do you eat your food?

What can't you do with one hand?

How do you open your Christmas presents?

How do you do your hair?

EMOTIONAL

Do you feel proud of who you are?

Do you enjoy having a limb difference?

Is it hard living with just one hand?

PROSTHETICS



Do you have
different arms
for different
stuff?

Is it hard
to use your
prosthetic?

When you put a
fake hand on,
how do you use
the fingers?

What is your
favourite
game on your
play station?

KIDS JUST BEING THEMSELVES



After Tommy and Lottie had spoken to her new class about their limb differences, we gave each pupil a post it note and said they could ask any question they wanted. The results were interesting and could be broken down into practical questions - how do you... to emotional ones about how it feels to have a limb difference. There were also ones targeted at prosthetics as both Tommy and Lottie have a Hero Arm which is a multi grip myoelectric prosthetic.

What was interesting were the generic questions like the ones above - favourite play station game etc so we could see that they were already being accepted as themselves.

Checklist

- ☐ Home visit
- ☐ How to refer to limb difference
- ☐ Lunch - equipment
- ☐ What do they want help with
- ☐ PE Equipment and changing
- ☐ Pens/scissors/classroom aids
- ☐ 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!



Team LimbBo

www.limbbofoundation.co.uk

