



In The Picture

Inspiring the book world to include disabled children

10 Ways to Start Including Disabled Children in Your Pictures

Many illustrators who contact In The Picture express concerns about “getting it wrong” or “offending” people – we hope these examples will help alleviate some of those fears and encourage you to “give it a go!”

It is easy to be overwhelmed with the task of including disabled children in images and not start at all. Here is a selection of ideas to help you start this process in a gentle way.

The disabled person does not have to be a central character in your storyline and illustrations; they could be in the background of a group scene, or a parent or sibling of one of the characters. By identifying with characters in books children learn about themselves and the world around them, representations don't have to be complex, a simple hint is sufficient for a disabled child to see him or herself.

Most of the examples below are taken from our image bank – for more information visit the image bank and click on “Enlarge Image” - you will be given more information including links to other websites for detail.

1. When drawing buildings it is easy to show adaptations such as ramped access – demonstrating that disabled people can access the building – it may not be necessary to show the ramp in use.



2. Show how an environment has been made more accessible – this poolside chair on wheels is an example. In the image bank this picture also shows ramped access to the swimming pool. Also in the image bank there is an illustration of a pelican crossing showing the tactile paving, the red and green man light system and the audio “bleeper”. These [and other] environmental adaptations have been around a long time and can be forgotten as methods of demonstrating an accessible environment!



3. If you don't want to use as much detail as above other environmental clues could be hearing loop signs, signage in symbols, supportive handrails etc.

This image shows a poster of British Sign Language - Everyday Signs, you can see it on the walls of many schools, nurseries and playgroups around the country – why not have something like this in the background of your illustration?



4. Show some of the children wearing spectacles – very few books for children have images of children wearing spectacles and many children have a visual impairment and wear them!



5. Show how a child can be supported to reach equipment – this image shows a child with restricted growth standing on a box. In the photo reference section of the image bank there is a photograph of a child using a support cushion attached to the back of his chair. Remember adaptations don't have to be complex!



6. Show a child wearing a hearing aid – again this doesn't have to be a complex illustration a simple hint is sufficient for a deaf child to see him or herself represented!



7. Leg and arm splints can be quite subtly included in images of children in all kinds of settings. You can see illustrations of all types of splint in our image bank.



8. If you are drawing a group of children in a setting with tables e.g. a classroom or dining area you don't have to show a complete wheelchair – you can just "hint" at its presence. An illustration of Matilda by Roald Dahl sent to our children's gallery has done this very successfully!



9. Show people communicating through gesture – many children use a form of sign language to communicate – one child shown here is anticipating lunch by using the knife and fork sign and the other is saying a "thumbs up" good! Many BSL signs are obtainable easily.



10. Finally – remember that disability does not have to mean “wheelchair”. There are many ways to include disabled children in your illustrations without showing a wheelchair – built up shoes, aids for dyslexia, supportive chairs and walking frames to name but a few. This illustration shows a girl with dyslexia using a yellow acetate overlay to help her define letters more easily.



You can see over 50 illustrations in our demonstration image bank which aim to inspire illustrators to include disabled children in their pictures: <http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk/inspiration.htm>

It can be helpful to know in photographic detail about a particular accessory or piece of equipment a child is using, how an arm looks when it is holding a ball or what an inclusive classroom looks like. Visit the photo reference section of the In The Picture image bank for more detail: <http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk/reference.htm>

In The Picture publications can be downloaded from the resources page including our leaflet, research and conference reports: <http://www.childreninthepicture.org.uk/resources.htm>

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