MORE THAN **FLAGS** AND RAINBOWS

Circle Time:
Names, Differences & Respect

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Purpose
A short 15-20 minute circle time to help children understand that people are different, it is okay to be curious or confused, and we can still treat people with kindness and respect. This activity can be helpful if a child starts in a class with a gender identity that differs from their biological sex, or they are gender non-confirming. Keep the activity general. Do not identify or refer to any individual pupil.

1. Names
Ask: "Do you know anyone who is called something different from their full name?"
Examples might include Elizabeth/Lizzie, Matthew/Matt, using a middle name or having a nickname.

"If someone tells us the name they like to be called, what should we do?"
Key message: We listen and try to use that name. If we make a mistake, we correct ourselves and carry on.

2. We are all different
Ask: "What are some ways people in our school might be different?"

Prompt children to think about families, appearance, interests, personalities, languages, clothes and the things we are good at. Then try some quick examples:

- Can girls like football?
- Can boys like dancing?
- Can anyone like pink?
- Can anyone have long hair?

Key message: There isn't one right way to be you.

3. It's okay not to understand
Say: "Sometimes someone might tell us something about themselves that we don't completely understand. Is that okay?"
For example: "Someone tells you they don't like birthday parties because they find them overwhelming. You love parties and don't understand why they don't. Does that mean they're wrong?"

Key message: It's okay to be curious or confused. We don't have to completely understand somebody's experience to be kind to them.

4. What would you do?
Give children some situations and discuss how a kind classmate could respond.

- "My name is Charlotte, but I like being called Charlie."
  - We try to call them Charlie.
- "I'm a boy and I love playing with dolls."
  - That's fine. Toys and interests are for everyone.
- "Last week I told you football was my favourite thing. Now I love swimming instead."
  - That's fine. People can change their minds.
- "Someone said, 'I'm a boy', but another day they said, 'I'm a girl'."
  - We might feel confused, and that's okay. We don't need to argue with them or make them give us an answer. They might still be working things out.

"Someone has told me something about themselves and I don't understand."
Be kind. If you still have questions, speak privately to a trusted adult.

"Someone keeps laughing at another child because they're different."
Support them and tell an adult.

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5. Our class agreement

Finish by agreeing:

- We listen to people.
- We use the name they ask us to use.
- We don't tell people what they should like or how they should behave.
- It's okay to be confused and ask questions.
- We don't keep questioning someone about something personal.
- We don't tease people for being different.

Key message

You don't have to completely understand somebody to be kind to them.

Guidance for staff

Keep any responses short, calm and consistent. Children asking genuine questions or being confused should not automatically be treated as displaying prejudice.

- "Are they a boy or a girl?"
  - "They've told us they'd like to be known as a boy, so that's what we're going to do. It's okay if you've got questions or you're a bit confused. You can always talk to me about it."
- "But they told us they were a girl before."
  - "Sometimes people are still working things out and might describe themselves differently at different times. We don't need to work it out for them."
- "Why have they changed their name?"
  - "They've told us the name they'd like us to use, so we're going to use it, just like we would for anyone else."
- "What if they change their mind again?"
  - "That's okay. Sometimes people need time to work things out. We can listen to what they tell us."
- "Were they born a boy or a girl?"
  - "That's personal information about them, so we're not going to discuss it. If you've got questions about boys, girls or bodies, you can ask me privately."
- "I still don't understand."
  - "That's okay. You don't have to understand everything straight away. You can still be kind and respectful, and you can always ask me questions privately."

If children repeatedly question a child about their identity, step in rather than expecting them to explain themselves.
Do not make them responsible for explaining gender identity to their classmates.