

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

"It's not fair!"

One of the many joys of being part of the Foundry Lane family is that we are such an inclusive community. Around 22% of our pupils have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and are able to participate in mainstream education. But this richness of diversity can also sometimes feel confusing for our children. They might come home and say, "Why does so-and-so get to play on a tablet?" or "It's not fair, I'm always good and I never get extra reward time." How can we best explain, especially when we don't think it sounds very fair either? Here are some thoughts ...

Schools are required by law to make "reasonable adjustments" that enable SEND children to access the curriculum and flourish in education settings. For the children experiencing these adjustments, our actions are what they need but to non-SEND children, they can sometimes seem unfair. I'd like to unpack what we might mean by "fair" and hopefully that will help us have a better perspective on what's happening.



My hunch is that when it comes to deciding if something is fair or unfair, we're thinking about a desire for equality. The left hand picture gives us an example of equality, everyone has the same sized box to stand on, so surely that's fair isn't it?

The image makes it very clear that it isn't fair because the needs of each individual haven't been taken into account. If everyone has identical help and support, whilst that may be great for some children it will still leave others at a massive disadvantage. This is why we make "reasonable adjustments" and this is called equity, shown in the right hand picture ...



Whilst it may not seem "fair" that one person has 2 boxes, while another has none, what we can see is that equity allows all participants to access the game. Of course, what is obvious in these pictures is that the shortest person is at a very clear disadvantage, their needs are easy to see. The challenge our children may experience when they see apparent injustices is that not all SEND needs are visible or obvious.

Maybe the next time we find ourselves wondering why "that child" is allowed to do some things while others are not, we can have a conversation about the difference between equality and equity. I have spoken with friends whose children attend schools that are not as welcoming to SEND children as we are and I believe their schools are the poorer for this. Children attending Foundry Lane get to experience learning alongside people who are different from them, who have other but just as valid needs. This richness prepares them for the future, to have an understanding of the needs of others and to feel compassion for others who do not experience equity.

We try and run SENDsational Families once every half term. These drop in sessions are open to all parents and carers, whether their children have diagnosed additional needs or not. We'd love to raise awareness of the needs of our families who are supporting SEND children so that we can make Foundry Lane an even more inclusive community. Our next session will be held in the Blue Room on Tuesday 14th May from 2pm and we'll be hosting a problem solving coffee hour. Why not come along, meet some other parents and enjoy a cuppa and a chocolate biscuit?

Got any questions? Need any help? Please email me at parenting@foundrylaneprimary.co.uk