

Colour Blind Awareness

Press Release

1st April 2015

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) Conference 2015 debates need for educational staff to be trained to support colour blind pupils

Colour Blind Awareness is delighted that ATL is forwarding a Motion to support colour blind children in schools, at their Spring Conference 2015 today.

Kathryn Albany-Ward, Founder of Colour Blind Awareness, said

“We are pleased to support ATL’s recent research into the awareness of colour blindness amongst its Members.

“The ATL research reveals that despite our recent **#1ineveryclassroom** campaign receiving widespread media coverage, including television, only 15% of ATL Members surveyed said they have one or more pupils in their educational setting who require some support with learning because of their colour blindness.

“This is at odds with the statistical occurrence of (inherited) colour blindness which affects 1 in 12 boys and 1 in 200 girls – or, put another way, at least one child in every UK classroom.

“Further, over half (53.3%) of ATL’s Members surveyed said that they are somewhat aware of how colour blindness affects pupils’ learning but that they do not have a pupil in their class/school/college with the condition.”

“We are therefore not surprised to find that a quarter (26.3%) said they were not aware of how colour blindness can affect pupils’ learning.”

“These survey results confirm our own research and we have long said if you ask any teacher how many colour blind pupils they’ve taught, their answer will usually be ‘one or two’ but statistics demonstrate that it is more likely to have been one in every class they’ve ever taught.”

Statistics

- Colour vision deficiency (CVD) affects 1 in 12 boys/1 in 200 girls
- Boys are almost 20 times more likely to have CVD than girls (depends upon ethnic makeup of school populations)
- CVD affects 320 million worldwide (the same as the population of the USA), 33m in Europe, c3m in UK
- 1 in every classroom = 450,000 CVD pupils in UK schools, or enough to completely fill 400 average secondary schools/13,500 classrooms (of 30 pupils)

- There are 15,000 CVD teachers, all experiencing some problems in school themselves.

Like dyslexia, before it was well known and well understood, colour blindness is a hidden disability and can lead to children becoming disillusioned with learning or feeling that they are stupid or less able than others – just because they see colours differently. It can provide a faulty foundation for learning and even affect how well they do in their GCSE/A Level exams and the choices of careers open to them when they leave school. Parents and teachers don't realise that textbooks, worksheets and educational products just aren't designed with colour blind pupils in mind.

Kathryn Albany-Ward explains: "The #1ineveryclassroom campaign was launched because there are approximately 450,000 colour blind children in UK schools but there's no Government advice for parents or teachers.

"Teachers aren't trained in how to identify and support their colour blind pupils, even though there is likely to be one in every classroom. Colour blind children tend to be hidden in the classroom because their condition is currently not recognised as a Special Educational Need (SEN) by schools.

"Our #1ineveryclassroom campaign is essential because children with CVD are unlikely to be diagnosed. Parents aren't aware that their children are no longer screened on school entry and because colour vision testing is not a statutory part of the NHS eye test for children, opticians often ignore the test (perhaps because there is no cure and so no way to make money from it). The result is that when we are screening children we often find children already wearing glasses and who are colour blind but who have never had their colour vision tested.

"If parents don't know their child has CVD then they can't notify the school and if schools no longer screen and so rely on parents to notify, it's not difficult to appreciate that approximately 80% CVD pupils arrive at secondary school undiagnosed – potentially seriously affecting exam results and future career prospects."

Founded in 2009 by Kathryn after she was shocked to discover by chance that her own then 7 year old son was colour blind, the organisation (which is a not-for profit Community Interest Company) is gaining recognition and support across the UK and is exporting its experience and advice overseas.

One of its most vocal supporters is Northumberland-based mum of two Marie Difolco who, in support of her son Marcus, commissioned an animation – kindly created and donated by Gareth Wood, a parent of another child from school - which shows the different ways colours appear to Marcus. She hopes this will give people more understanding about the condition.

The animation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5OYL3Kw8L8>
- features a cloud with Marcus singing his own version of the rainbow song.

Marie explains “When we found out Marcus was colour blind we really needed the help and information that Colour Blind Awareness offered. They’ve supported us, helped with training at Marcus’s school and just generally been there.

“A parent at Marcus’s school is a graphic designer and he kindly put together this amazing awareness raising and myth-busting animation for us.”

Kathryn adds: “We hope the film will help dispel the myth that colour blind people just confuse red and green, or see only in black and white. We were also hoping that it would raise awareness of colour blind pupils amongst schools and teachers, but the ATL research demonstrates just how far our campaign still needs to run.”

“I hope ATL Members will vote for today’s Motion to undertake further research into how pupils are affected by colour blindness and its call for training in colour blindness for educators.”

The #1ineveryclassroom campaign is being run across traditional and social media platforms with interested people asked to use the #1ineveryclassroom hashtag @colourblindorg

TV reports for the #1ineveryclassroom campaign can be seen here (which also demonstrate how a classroom might appear to a colour blind child).

BBC Look North <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxrnAAhI28E>
CBBC Newsround <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRfJK5kGlxg>

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