How to Create an Inclusive Classroom: 12 Tips for Teachers
#1

Define clear minimum standards for behaviour.

Every child in your class should be absolutely clear about the minimum, basic acceptable levels of behaviour are. These should be absolutes – rules which, you tell your pupils, are not hard to follow, and should not ever be broken.

Keep these short and simple, so everyone can understand them. Try to make these rules not about learning, specifically, but about ensuring everyone feels safe and respected.
Just as you must make the basic rules absolutely clear and understood, you must also have straightforward consequences for breaking those rules.

These consequences must be proportionate (talking over another child once or twice would not be grounds for detention, for example), and consistently applied. Remember: the rules for behaviour are the minimum of what is acceptable in your classroom, so never let anyone get away with breaking them.

Think about the more serious consequences you would have for more serious, repeated rule-breaking, and apply those consistently, too.
If a child repeatedly misbehaves—calling out, for example—a common approach adopted by many teachers would be to write their name on the board, as a reminder. Don't do this. It is an insensitive way of dealing with an issue, which visibly singles out a child in front of everyone. Instead, write it down on a piece of paper on your desk, where others cannot see it. If you write a child's name down on a piece of paper, they know they have misbehaved. They also have the opportunity to stop, and amend their behaviour without further consequence.

If you write the name of a child who misbehaves on the board—visible to everyone—why would they choose to change their behaviour? Their name will remain up there, for all to see, regardless of whether they start to behave better, or not. It's humiliating – and not inclusive, especially for children who regularly struggle with some of the basic rules (e.g. those with attention deficit disorders).
#4
Create opportunities to listen to all children.

This is especially important when resolving conflicts between children in your class. Allow time for the children involved to fully explain how they believe the incident arose, as well as what has upset them and why.

Create opportunities day-to-day, during normal lessons and learning, for children to be listened to as well. This helps them engage with the learning and feel included in it.

Listen to all children’s thoughts in the creation of additional classroom rules (beyond the minimum, basic ones we talked about before).
What is 'scaffolding' in terms of teaching and learning? We could write an entire book about scaffolding, but in the simplest terms, **scaffolding means giving support so that all pupils can access the same learning.**

Scaffolding is absolutely key to creating an inclusive learning environment. You want all of the children in your class to be accessing the same information during a lesson (even if you slightly differentiate your resources and activities). If you set totally different tasks for some children because they cannot access what you have planned for the rest of the class, you are excluding them.
For a truly inclusive classroom, it's not enough just to know which of your children have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). You should know which, if any, of your children are on Free School Meals (FSM), which are caregivers, which are in foster care, which have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and which children are from the particularly vulnerable Roma or traveller communities.

Knowing this will help you consider every aspect of your classroom, and how you make it inclusive, safe and purposeful.
Some inclusion strategies are so universally beneficial for all students, that they are worth doing in every classroom! For example, many children with dyslexic traits struggle to read pure black text on a pure white background. Simply changing the colours you use on your slides, avoiding black on white, can help not only children with a dyslexia diagnosis, but all children.

What if you have children with mild dyslexic traits that are unlikely to be diagnosed? Changing your slides will help them, too!

Changing the colours of your slides to ones which are less high-contrast makes them less tiring to view and read, too: better for everyone – you included!

This is just one example of an inclusive change which benefits all children, but there are many, many others.
# 8

Create a calm, purposeful learning environment.

This is another big one which promotes inclusion for all in your classroom. We all need calm in order to learn. But creating a calm environment in class is a tricky thing to master, particularly if you have a class of children who have come up from a previous class where low-level disruption such as chatter was tolerated.

Ensure you clearly define when group discussion or working is required and acceptable, and when it is most certainly not. Make it clear that preventing others from working during independent learning time is unacceptable (add it to your basic rules).

A calm environment is inclusive for many of your children, regardless of whether they have a special need for it or not: every child's home life can be chaotic at times – that's life.
#9

Clearly display timetables and key information.

Some children with dyslexic and dyspraxic traits struggle with organisation, as do some with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Clearly displaying timetables (visual timetables are great, especially for younger learners) helps them, and all your children, feel involved in the school day.

With a clearly displayed timetable, children can look ahead to their favourite or least favourite activities, and mentally prepare accordingly: they may think to themselves 'How will I show everyone how good I am at History later on?' or 'How will I cope with PE today?' Sharing the timetable for all to see includes children and empowers them.

The same is true for key vocabulary, facts or concepts relating to what you’re currently learning in class. Stick this information up for all to see on display boards. This helps remind children of prior learning, and to answer questions or tackle tricky tasks.
You might be thinking to yourself: 'What has this got to do with inclusion?' Well, again, this is about engaging children and making them feel like they have a say in their own learning.

Don't just assume what your children already know or don't know when you're planning a new topic; ask them! That way you'll identify areas which children are curious to learn more about, and avoid going over very familiar learning.

Pre-assessing children's prior knowledge, and interests around a subject, in this way shows them that they have been listened to, and included in their own learning. It's a powerful tool for inclusion in the classroom.
Inclusion works by finding the best way to ensure all children can access the learning, and have the opportunity to achieve. Setting exactly the same task for all children may not help you to achieve that, particularly when it comes to assessing learning.

When you get to the end of the topic, it might be tempting to assess children's learning with a written test. Don't do this (at least not every time, anyway)! Instead, offer children a choice of ways of presenting what they have learned.

Of course, you'll need to provide sufficient resources and support, plus encourage children to choose a way of showing their learning which plays to their own strengths.

Giving children a choice empowers them. It's inclusive, because it creates equal opportunities to show learning and progress in a way that a standard test (which many children struggle with) may not.
For some children with additional needs, the comparison between themselves and others in their class can feel as stark, and as disheartening. Don't do this. What's the point, anyway? How can comparing the attainment of one learner to another possibly help either of them?

Instead, focus entirely on children’s personal progress, and encourage them to do the same. Ask: 'Can you do even better than you did last time?', 'What do you want to focus on that you found tricky the last time we looked at this?', or 'What’s changed from when we started learning about this, to now?'.

Even if a child hasn't made progress, they can identify ways in which they want to. Teach children that identifying their own shortcomings, or areas for improvement is learning. By doing so, they are still actively engaging with the learning and including themselves in it.