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Teaching children to respect difference

A ground breaking educational programme encouraging young children, between the ages of 3 and 5, to respect physical, racial and cultural differences between themselves and others, has been launched.

The Media Initiative for Children programme combines TV advertisements and interaction in the early years setting to build a greater understanding of physical, racial and cultural differences among very young children.

It is anticipated that every child within the early years sector in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, will have access to the Media Initiative for Children programme by 2006.

Early years experts believe that the impact and effects of the programme could be a key factor in building a culture of respect across Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The educational programme, a joint effort between NIPPA - the Early Years Organisation and Peace Initiatives Institute (PII) involves children watching a series of short television cartoons featuring animated characters who act out different situations of exclusion and inclusion which occur while children are playing together in a park.

The clever use of adverts, a catchy tune and interactive activities help children to talk about how they feel and their attitudes when they are excluded or are faced with people who are different to themselves.