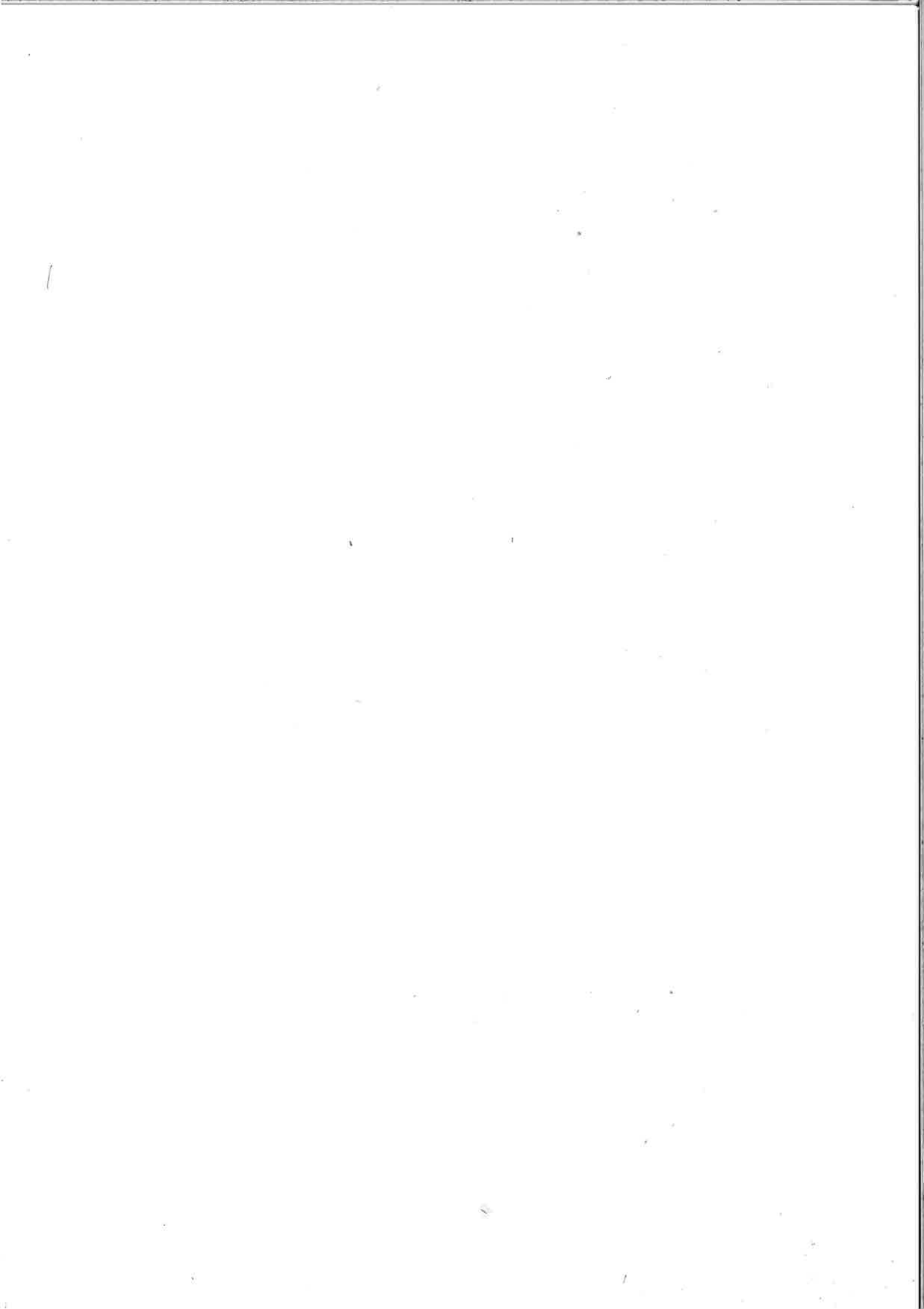






Case Study: Cerebral Palsy

My name is Kiran and I was born with Cerebral Palsy which means that the part of my brain which controls my legs doesn't work properly. I use a wheelchair. I don't think that this is the most important thing about me because I am used to it and have grown up with it, but it is a big issue for other people. When my parents first approached the local primary school about me going there they were horrified and tried to stop me going there. Although I was only young I knew that people saw me as a problem and that I was unwanted.

The school eventually said they would allow me to go there if I had an adult helper with me all the time. She followed me everywhere, even to the toilets. I was unable to get rid of her. She was always doing things for me even when I could do them for myself. That made me feel useless like a baby. I think she was there because the teachers said I needed help, but actually it was the teachers who needed her because I think they were scared of how to cope with me on their own. One day I arrived at school and the helper wasn't there so the teacher said I had to go back home. My mum was angry. Couldn't the teacher bear to have me in the class until the helper arrived?

As the teachers got to know me things got better. People started to see me more as a normal person but even during the last term in primary school something happened which made me really angry and for the first time stopped me feeling guilty about my disability. It made me realise that I had nothing to be ashamed of. The Year 6 classes were putting on a play after the end of SATs and everybody was given a role. I love acting and I really thought that I had a very good chance of getting a good part in the play. The teacher, however, decided that I should sit off stage with the Year 5 children who sang songs but didn't do any of the acting. That made me really angry. I refused to go to the performance. Up until that time I had always apologised for my disability and felt guilty about my wheelchair. But I realised that I had done nothing wrong and it was them who had the problem not me.

Now I am in secondary school things are a lot better because it is a school designed for people with wheelchairs. I don't have too many problems apart from the fact that although I got a level five in my English SATs I was put in the lowest set and also the tables in the canteen are too low so the wheelchair users have to sit on our own table away from our mates at lunchtimes.

Most of the kids treat me like I'm no different. If I do have a problem, it is with kids who don't know me. They sometimes stare at me like I'm a freak or talk to me like an idiot. They speak very slowly and loudly and talk over my head. Once in a maths lesson a girl just sat staring at me. I asked her, 'What's your problem?' She denied staring at me but I knew the truth. I'm lucky I can speak because once they get to know me they realise I'm not an idiot and talk normally to me. On the whole kids treat me OK.





Case Study: Cerebral Palsy (Cont)

Adults though are far worse because they sometimes speak to each other as if you are not in the room. They talk to each other like, 'Doesn't he use big words?' as if I should just sit there and giggle and poo in my pants. They think they are helping me but in fact they are being really annoying and patronising, which can be very difficult for me to deal with.

On the whole things have got a lot better for kids like me. If I was born in Roman times I would have been thrown off a cliff or dumped in a river as soon as anybody realised I had a disability. If I was born 100 years ago I would have been put in a workhouse. If I was born 20 years ago I might not have had the opportunity to go to a mainstream school. If I could change one thing it would be people's attitude.

