**Casey’s Story**

**Narration**

This is Casey. At home Casey likes to wear different clothes depending upon how they feel that day. Casey admires her look in the full-length mirror in her bedroom. She wears clothes and jewellery which makes them feel really good. Sometimes she will wear a short skirt with leggings and a shirt and other times a pair of trousers with a blouse and beads or a blazer with a t-shirt and stockings. She tries out different hair styles and make-up. She likes to experiment.

Casey knows her style is different to a lot of people, but she just likes to wear what she enjoys and feels good in.

“Looking good” she says to her reflection, admiring herself in the mirror. As her grin widens into a big, broad smile, sunshine fills the room.

**PAUSE POINT (at 58 seconds)**

**There may be questions you would like to ask the children at this point or you may wish to encourage the children to ask questions or make comments. Below are possible things you could discuss, but these are by no means prescriptive. Also they do not need to be discussed in any particular order**

**Points that may be raised:**

* **You could explore what Casey wears and why she/they might want to experiment with different styles (this may link to any points about how Casey identifies, as some of her choices might be considered more typically feminine, others are more masculine and some are a combination).**
* **In the narration, Casey is referred to as “they” and “she” – it is likely that Casey is exploring her gender identity, and possibly regard her/themself as gender fluid or non-binary. At this stage they are probably unsure and that is not an issue. What is important is she is able to explore her identity. You can start by asking children why they think sometimes Casey is referred to as “they” and sometimes as “she”. You then may want to emphasise that most people are born male/female and are happy with that identity, but for a few people there is some uncertainty and that is okay.**
* **You could discuss what we might think if Casey identified as he/they and how might that change the way we feel about them.**
* **You could discuss how Casey is similar and/or different to many other children.**

Today is a non-school uniform day. Casey chooses some of their current favourite clothes to wear in which they feel comfortable and distinctive, like when they are admiring themselves in the wardrobe mirror. But Casey’s also feeling a bit nervous as she prepares to leave for school.

When Casey arrives at the school gates the playground is already quite full of children. Casey starts to feel jittery as she walks across the playground to the building where her classroom is. She can feel people’s eyes on her but when she glances at them they look away, pretending to be talking to their friends. They whisper things that she cannot hear. Casey’s gaze drops to the ground as the sunshine disappears behind a cloud.

Casey enters the classroom, and her classmates begin to giggle and point. They snigger with each other, whispering behind their hands. But they are loud enough for her to hear – “Weirdo!”, “Did you sleepwalk into the wrong wardrobe this morning?”, “Freak!”, “You make me want to throw up.”

Casey wants a big hole to open up in the classroom floor and swallow her up. Instead the lump stuck in her throat prevents her from saying anything.

When the bell rings for breaktime, Mrs Reed tells the children that they can “go outside today because although the clouds are gathering it is not raining – yet.”

Casey is very slow to put her things away and get up from the desk. Mrs Reed sits behind her own desk pretending to get on with some work, but she is fully aware that Casey is ‘hovering’. “Is everything alright, Casey?” she asks. Casey has always liked Mrs Reed. She smiles a lot and is often very funny with the class. She makes the classroom feel warm and safe.

“Casey?” Mrs Reed asks again as she gets up and walks over towards her. Casey lifts her head slowly fighting back tears. “Oh, Casey, what on earth is wrong?”

Casey tells Mrs Reed about the behaviour of the other children, how they looked at her and the things they said. Mrs Reed listens. Casey thinks that Mrs Reed is a good listener. She nods and ‘umms’ at the right places without interrupting. But you know from the way that she is concentrating that she is taking everything in, what Casey is saying and also how Casey is feeling even though she doesn’t say it.

**PAUSE POINT (at 3 mins 35 seconds)**

**Again, there may be specific questions you would like to ask the children, or you may give them the opportunity to comment or ask questions.**

**Points that may be raised:**

* **Why might Casey be nervous about going to school today?**
* **Why do you think the children in the story react as they do and call Casey names?**
* **How do you think Casey feels?**
* **Why do you think Casey chooses to talk to Mrs Reed? What does Mrs Reed do that helps Casey talk to her?**
* **What do you think Mrs Reed should do next? Why do you think she should do that?**

“Well , that sounds horrible, Casey, and I can fully understand why you feel so upset.” Mrs Reed pauses for just a moment, then, “I think I have an idea for what we might do later. For now would you like to stay here during the break?” Casey nods. Mrs Reed has made her feel better already. “Oh, and by the way, Casey, I think you look great today.”

At the end of the day, just before home time, Mrs Reed gathers the class together in front of the whiteboard and gets their attention, “3,2, 1…eyes on me.” Mrs Reed talks to the class about self-expression and why it is important. She then shows the class several images and photographs of a range of people of different ages and different colours all demonstrating their own ways of dressing and looking. Casey thinks they look pretty confident as if they are staring or glancing at themselves in their own mirror but at the same time aware that they are being looked at. There was a bit of giggling at some of the images, but Casey can see that the children are interested in the choices that the people in the images have made to express themselves.

Mrs Reed then puts the children into pairs to talk to their partner about what they think is unique about themselves in terms of their interests and their own style and why this is important to them. Mrs Reed reminds the class that everyone is different and that a healthy community – like their class – would accept people for their individuality and that we can all learn from each other’s differences.

Then she announces an art project for the class in which each student has to create a self-portrait which illustrates their own personal traits, interests or styles. “We will call the art project, ‘Let’s Celebrate who we are!’

The following week the class holds an exhibition of their artwork. Their self portraits adorn the walls of their classroom, and they excitedly skitter around the classroom to see what everyone else has done. During the course of the day other students and even the headteacher come in to look at their artwork.

There is a buzz amongst the class when at the end of that day, just before home time, Mrs Reed gathers them together, praises them for their efforts and for their unique differences. She says, “Remember, embracing and respecting each other’s unique qualities and forms of self-expression can create a vibrant community, like our class, where everyone feels valued and included.”

Mrs Reed smiles and winks at Casey, as the class packs up their things and leaves the room. They don’t need to put on their coats as the sun is shining brightly outside.

**PAUSE POINT (at 6 minutes 36 seconds – after this there are only a few credits)**

**Again there may be specific questions you would like to ask the children or you may give them the opportunity to comment or ask questions.**

**Points that may be raised:**

* **What do you think of the choice Mrs Reed made? Why do you think she choose to do this activity?**
* **How do you think this activity makes Casey feel?**
* **What do you think the children would learn by doing ‘Let’s celebrate who we are’?**
* **Why do you think activities like ‘Let’s celebrate who we are’ are important?**
* **We can sometimes be unkind to other people because we think they are ‘different’ – in what ways might we see other people as ‘different’ to us? How can we make other people feel welcome?**
* **Having watched the animation are there any things similar to this you would like to talk about? Are there any things that you would worry about having watched the animation?**