

Wirral Hearing Support Service (Deaf Education Services)

We are a team of teachers of the deaf and specialist teaching assistants able to provide a range of support to deaf children and young people from pre-school to age 19 right across Wirral. We can also provide some advice where Deaf families are involved (whether or not the child is deaf), if needed. We are part of SESS and are based at the Solar Campus.

Contact Details

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We can:

- Test children's/young people's hearing
- Provide a range of INSET and continuing information/advice/support to setting and school staff
- Provide in-class/pre-tutoring/post-tutoring and other support on a short term/long term basis where this is assessed by our service as being needed
- Provide/loan out assistive technology where this is assessed by our service as being needed
- Provide information about other services which might assist the child/young person/family
- Assist/support children/young people/families and settings/schools/colleges at key points such as transition stages

We always work closely with setting/school staff, and with parents/carers to ensure effective outcomes for each individual child/young person being supported.

Information for Classroom Teachers & Other Professionals

Definitions

Our service uses the term 'deaf' to mean all types of deafness/hearing loss, including temporary deafness such as that caused by 'glue ear'

Our service uses the term 'Deaf' to refer to those deaf people who consider themselves to be culturally deaf, who use sign language as their preferred language and identify with the Deaf Community

Underpinning Philosophy

'Deaf children have the same potential for language and learning as hearing children, and the right to access the knowledge, skills and experiences available to hearing children in an appropriate and relevant curriculum' (*Ruth Swanwick & Susan Gregory; 2007*)

'Decisions made about deaf children's education and educational requirements are based on their strengths and abilities, not on what they are perceived as being unable to do' (*Ruth Swanwick & Susan Gregory; 2007*)

Language and Communication Philosophy

It is important to recognise that each deaf child is unique and as such will develop differently in terms of the language and communication options which may best suit them.

It is paramount that parents/carers and deaf children/young people themselves are given clear and unbiased information about their deafness, and about language and communication options so that informed choices can then be made.

Parents/carers and other family members are seen as having a key role in the natural development of language and communication with their deaf child. Our service offers information, support and guidance as appropriate to the needs of each family.

Many deaf children are able to learn to develop speech and listening skills provided that they are given good listening conditions. This may mean learning to use hearing aids and/or cochlear implants effectively, and/or being provided with good listening environments in which to learn. Our service staff are skilled and experienced in encouraging and facilitating development of speech and listening skills, using the natural aural approach, for those deaf children who are able to access spoken language.

For some children, although they may have access to spoken language at some level, they function best when they are also given visual-gestural cues. This may mean that fingerspelling and/or 'key signs' from British Sign Language (BSL) are used alongside spoken language to facilitate understanding and to assist in the further development of spoken and written English. This is known as Sign Supported English or SSE. Our service staff can provide support and guidance in the appropriate use of SSE.

For children who are not able to access spoken language, or who for other reasons need to develop a visual-gestural language, our service staff are able to advise and provide support in the development of British Sign Language – a full and complete language with its own vocabulary, structure and grammar (BSL was officially recognised as a minority language by the Government in 2003). Where this is the case, Sign Bilingualism may provide the best route to the acquisition of both BSL and written English.

Where SSE or BSL are being used with deaf children it is important that teachers and support staff are clear about which language/mode is being used and for what purpose. Children need to become aware of the differences between BSL, SSE, and spoken language, and of their distinct roles in the context of teaching and learning (and in different social contexts).

The Importance of Language

'Language is so tightly woven into human experience that it is scarcely possible to imagine life without it. Chances are that if you find two or more people together anywhere on earth, they will soon be exchanging words. When there is no-one to talk with, people talk to themselves, to their dogs, even to their plants' (Steven Pinker)

'In the school setting, everything is dominated by language, from formal lessons in the classroom to games in the playground with friends. Speech and language are used to give and get information, give instructions, make friends, make jokes, express feelings.'
(Jill McMinn 2006)

Whilst, for educational purposes, it tends to be the case that each child will have a preferred/dominant mode of communication for accessing the curriculum, it should be remembered that deaf children and young people may wish to have the choice of accessing both Deaf and hearing environments. It is therefore important that all deaf

children have a basic awareness of Deaf and hearing 'worlds', including an understanding of the cultures and the conventions for communication in each setting. In order to facilitate this, opportunities to meet Deaf/deaf adults and other D/deaf children will be encouraged.

Deaf children will change and develop as they get older, as is the case with all children. It is therefore important to follow a child-centred and flexible approach throughout deaf children's school lives to ensure that individual preferences in terms of learning styles and language dominance are noted and adjusted to as appropriate.

Further Information

For further information regarding language and communication, and the range of different approaches available in the education of deaf children, please see National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) publications (available direct from NDCS or from our service) and/or visit the NDCS website at www.ndcs.org.uk

General Points to Remember:

- **Every deaf child is an individual**, and their hearing loss will be different in each case. The categories given below provide a simplified list, but it is important to remember that many deaf children will have mixed or fluctuating hearing losses and/or may also be dealing with additional issues which make the overall picture more complicated than the basic information outlined in this document.
- Deaf children (as with all children) need time and space to play, to socialise with peers, and to be involved in school/class gatherings during the school day. Although much of the advice below is with regard to encouraging deaf children's language and communication development, it is imperative that **age-appropriate strategies** are used at all times (eg Foundation Stage children need to learn through various types of play) and that any tendency for 'over-adulting' is reduced as much as possible (ie whilst adult support may be necessary, children still need to be given opportunities to learn independently/discover things for themselves as much as possible).
- Where deaf children need to be withdrawn for **pre/post tutoring and/or for tutorials in Literacy and Numeracy**, it is vital that timetables are considered carefully and creatively so that key class activities are not missed more than is necessary. Consideration needs to be given not only to reasons of 'educational accessibility' re deciding on something from which a deaf child can be withdrawn, but also to wider social implications of missing particular sessions regularly.
- Deaf children need to develop **emotional and cognitive language** as well as language for communication. Time spent with other deaf children, with deaf adults and with others who have appropriate language skills (eg a clear understanding of oral/aural communication protocols & content with deaf children/British Sign Language skills at or above Level 3) enables these areas of language to develop naturally and should be seen as a priority throughout deaf children's development.
- **Good listening conditions** are very important in enabling a deaf child to access teaching & learning. Schools can use access budgets to improve the acoustic conditions in classrooms and other spaces. Good listening conditions mean that the environment is contained (eg a walled room with doors & windows closed rather than an open-plan environment) – to reduce noise interference from other areas; carpeted classrooms with acoustic tiles fitted to the ceiling, and with student work, including eg mobiles, on the walls

and blinds at the windows – all helping to reduce echo/reverberation. A distance of 1 – 3 metres between the teacher and the child will mean that the speech signal to background noise ratio is at its most favourable; finally, good classroom management will greatly assist. It is worth remembering that good listening conditions will actually assist all children in the class.

- When deaf children participate in **activities where conditions are noisy**, teaching and learning (including health & safety considerations) will need more thought in order to ensure that children are accessing spoken information/are looking at you in order to access lipreading and/or gestures/British Sign Language.
- Remember that **lipreading** is a skill which needs to be learned, and is also a 'knack'. Some deaf children are no better at lipreading than a person who hears normally. Context is all important because, in spoken English, only about 35% of speech sounds can be seen on the lips so there is a significant amount of guesswork involved. Consequently, lipreading is very tiring.
- It is important to remember that accessing verbal communication is hard work for any deaf child, and can be very tiring (this is not the case for children who hear normally, because they can naturally 'tune in and out' or 'switch on and off', thus filtering what they feel to be important or less important information – a deaf child has to concentrate all the time to make sure they don't miss anything). Therefore the importance of **using VAK (visual/auditory & kinaesthetic learning modes) in all lessons** cannot be overstated.
- When a deaf child participates in **swimming or in contact sports**, they need to remove their hearing aids (or cochlear implants). This means that it is vital to identify visual cues to ensure deaf children understand instructions in these situations (for children who use British Sign Language, HSS (Deaf Education Services) staff may provide support in British Sign Language during some such sessions). In addition, safety equipment, such as a 'scrum cap' for rugby/football, may be needed.

Enabling Strategies for the Classroom

Teacher Positioning

- Stand and face the deaf pupil when speaking
- Avoid writing on the whiteboard whilst talking
- Stand still when speaking
- Do not stand in front of a bright light or window – this will put your face in shadow and it will be very difficult to lipread

Communication Protocols

- Attract the deaf pupil's attention before speaking
- When addressing the deaf pupil, say their name and look at them
- Talk normally and naturally
- Use natural facial expressions and gestures
- Give information/instructions in short, clear sentences
- Allow time for the deaf pupil to look at and to process information
- The deaf pupil may have difficulty constructing questions or comments – additional time may need to be given to encourage them to do this
- During question and answer sessions, repeat other pupils' answers if the deaf pupil cannot access them

Providing a Context

- Prepare the deaf pupil for a new topic by giving them access to new vocabulary before the session begins. Visual aids are useful at this point

- Pre-teach, teach, then re-teach
- Lessons are much easier to follow if the vocabulary is familiar
- Difficulties with auditory memory may make it hard for a deaf pupil to process and retain information presented orally/aurally – using visual/kinaesthetic methods can assist here

Pupil Positioning

- Seat the deaf pupil where they can see you
- During discussions, try to arrange the class/group so that the deaf pupil can see other pupils' faces

Checking for Understanding

- Check understanding – do not accept a smile and/or a nod
- Rephrase your question and/or ask the deaf pupil to explain the task to you
- Beware of language confusion, especially homonyms
- Complex sentence structures may be difficult for a deaf pupil to understand
- Time needs to be allowed for processing information

Remember:

A deaf pupil has to concentrate for long periods of time, they cannot 'tune in and out' and still keep up as hearing children can – this can be tiring, frustrating and stressful

For older pupils

- Allow the pupil to pick the best place or seat for them to access the lesson, which may be to one side – thus favouring the 'better ear'
- Repeat in class any important assembly notices as the deaf pupil may have missed the details
- Darkened rooms are danger/high risk and must be prepared for in advance
- Tapes and films have voice overs – these are therefore very difficult to access. Use synopses and/or subtitling to assist
- Never ask a deaf pupil to watch a film and write notes or answer questions at the same time – this puts them at an unreasonable disadvantage

Questions to ask yourself – Classroom strategies with deaf children

- Is my face visible to the deaf pupil? Is the room lighting bright enough? Am I standing with my back to the window (which might make my face become a silhouette)?
- Do I stand still when talking to make my 'face reading' easier?
- Do I make sure I have the deaf pupil's attention before I start speaking?
- Is my speech clear, of normal pace and properly enunciated?
- Do I change the subject too often without warning?
- Do I allow time for the deaf pupil to absorb one piece of information before moving on to the next?
- If I am wearing a microphone, have I made sure that I am not wearing jewellery or clothing that might rub across it and distort the sound?
- Would more visual aids be helpful in assisting the deaf pupil to follow the lesson content?

Categories of deafness

MILD:

This hearing loss may be sensori-neural (affecting inner ear, cochlea, auditory nerve) or conductive (affecting outer/middle ear, caused by some form of blockage, may be temporary - eg caused by 'glue ear'). Children with this type of loss are not always given hearing aids, and their speech is usually intelligible. Advice is always available from HSS (Deaf Education Services) if requested.

MODERATE:

Good access to spoken language is provided if hearing aids are worn. However, children may have difficulty accessing speech sounds if they are not worn. Staff from HSS (Deaf Education Services) will be monitoring/supporting these children. Some speech sounds such as verb endings, word endings and prepositions (in, on, at, etc) may not be heard clearly and this may effect written English accuracy.

SEVERE:

Children with this degree of deafness will always be aided and would usually have use of a radio aid amplification system. Access to speech and written language will be difficult, even with consistent hearing aid use, and there may be difficulties with language and communication skills. Some children may have a cochlear implant. Some children may use aspects of/full British Sign Language as another means of communication & thinking, because all aspects of this visual-gestural language are readily accessible to them. Many speech sounds, including verb endings, word endings and prepositions (in, on, at, etc), use of different tenses, and the rhythms of natural speech which identify punctuation points may not be heard clearly and this may effect written English accuracy. English vocabulary may also be limited, and the understanding of complex sentence structures and inference may be restricted. Children with this level of deafness will receive support from HSS (Deaf Education Services), and regular advice is offered to school.

PROFOUND:

Access to speech and written language for profoundly deaf children will be difficult. They will always be aided, and have use of a radio aid system. They may be cochlear implant users. Some children may use aspects of/full British Sign Language. Many speech sounds, including verb endings, word endings and prepositions (in, on, at, etc), use of different tenses, and the rhythms of natural speech which identify punctuation points may not be heard clearly and this may effect written English accuracy. English vocabulary may also be limited, and the understanding of complex sentence structures and inference may be restricted. They are likely to need significant support from the HSS (Deaf Education Services), and regular input is offered to the school.

UNILATERAL/ MONAURAL

This is a condition in which hearing is good in one ear, but very poor, or possibly non-existent, in the other. Hearing aids rarely make a difference for these children. Rather than aid the poorer ear it is important to alert parents and teachers to the areas of difficulty that might be experienced.

For these children, progress in most areas of educational attainment, and speech and language acquisition - even at pre-school level - is normal. It is therefore easy, in a busy classroom, to forget that this child has some difficulties which need to be addressed.

It is important to realise that a child with a unilateral loss will have difficulty locating the source of a remark, and may turn in any direction until he/she has localised the source of the sound. They will also become confused easily in noisy situations.

GLUE EAR

Glue ear can affect children in different ways. Children with persistent or recurrent bouts of glue ear will not be hearing the whole of the speaker's message. They can be at risk of social and developmental problems, including delayed language, gaps in general knowledge and behavioural problems. Children will benefit from hearing clear, steady speech, from sitting near the teacher, having a clear view of the teacher's face, additional visual aids, and reduced background noise

Practical, inclusive strategies to empower teachers & children

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES	TYPE OF DEAFNESS					
	Mild	Mod	Sev	Prof	Uni	Glue ear
Seating the child appropriately for lipreading (but always remembering that lipreading is over 60% guesswork as only about 35% of English speech sounds can be seen on the lips)	√	√	√	√		√
Seating the child appropriately – with their 'good ear' near to the main speaker					√	√
Enabling good listening conditions whenever possible	√	√	√	√	√	√
Rephrasing instructions if needed – eg stating the context/topic first	√	√	√	√	√	
Relaying contributions from others – to make sure the deaf child has heard/accessed them and is therefore included & enabled to contribute	√	√	√	√	√	
Check that hearing aids are on and working (if not, please contact us immediately!)		√	√	√		
Indicating who is talking by pointing to the person before they start speaking (particularly during group work)		√	√	√	√	√
Using a Soundfield system regularly if one is installed in your area	√	√	√	√	√	√
Using radio aid regularly and appropriately (including charging it as advised please!) if the child has one (please contact us immediately if the radio aid doesn't seem to be working!)		√	√	√		
Using visual and kinaesthetic teaching & learning content to consolidate aural/oral learning (remember VAK!)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Teaching word endings (including plurals, adverbial endings such as 'ly' prefixes & suffixes), verb endings & use of tenses, prepositions and punctuation explicitly to improve written English accuracy - children will benefit from the use of fingerspelling to clarify & to provide a visual and kinaesthetic reminder of these areas of grammar			√	√		
Teaching new vocabulary (eg key words for each subject area as they arise) explicitly & consistently - again, fingerspelling may assist here			√	√		
Learning some basic British Sign Language signs will assist in communicating directly and easily with children who have an understanding of British Sign Language			√	√		
Working closely with HSS (Deaf Education Services) staff ensures that; a) lesson content information is available to enable appropriate preparation and support/teaching is provided to teachers and children b) staff work together during sessions and c) content and outcomes are discussed & evaluated regularly			√	√		
Remembering that large, open areas such as halls, swimming pools, sports fields and playgrounds will make hearing <u>more</u> difficult	√	√	√	√	√	√