

### **Classroom Practice and Strategies (Support for a deaf child in Early Years Settings)**

The following hints and tips give ideas of what staff from nursery and pre-school settings can do, to support a young deaf child (0 to 4 years). These deaf awareness strategies are useful for developing communication for all deaf children.

#### **Think visual! *Can the deaf child see at pre-school?***

**A deaf child will benefit from watching the speakers face to help support their listening and hearing.**

- Get the child's attention before you begin.
- Get down to the child's level and use natural speech.
- Sit in a circle so children can see each other and you.
- Give as many visual clues as possible (use visual timetables, and pictures). When telling a story use props and puppets so the deaf child can make the connection with what you are saying).

#### **Think Auditory! *Can the deaf child hear at pre-school?***

**A deaf child needs to make maximum use of the hearing they have, including wearing working hearing aids, if they have been issued.**

- Be deaf aware: Pre-schools are busy places and inevitably noisier than homes. For a deaf child listening to speech against any background noise can be very tiring and challenging.
- Be close to the child so they can hear you (1 to 2 metres maximum). (beyond this children may not discriminate all the sounds of speech)

#### **Think Understanding! *What can you do to help the deaf child follow?***

**Deaf children need help to make the most of their hearing and may use their other senses to support their learning.**

- Use short phrases or sentences accompanied by natural gesture e.g pointing if the child is having difficulty following.
- Teach the other children to speak one at a time in a group situation.
- Keep the noise levels down and make use of any small rooms for individual or group work.
- Check the child has understood you by giving them a specific instruction. (Deaf children often 'appear' to hear but may be just watching and copying other children).
- Check the deaf child knows the names of the adults and children at pre-school and is learning the names of activities on offer

#### **Think interaction! *How can you support play with other children***

**Deaf children may become isolated if they cannot hear what other children say to them during games and play**

- Observe the deaf child's play alongside others and when appropriate try to include the deaf child in the other children's games.
- Respond to the deaf child's attempts to communicate by observing their focus of interest, their facial expressions and body language.

## **Classroom Practice and Strategies - Support for a deaf child in Primary School**

- **Positioning:** The pupil should sit near the front and preferably with a supportive friend. This is essential because hearing aids work most effectively 1-2 metres from the speaker. It is helpful if the pupil can sit slightly to one side so that she/he can look at and lip read other pupils who are speaking. She/he may also need to turn to locate speakers who are behind her/him.
- **Reduce Background Noise:** Hearing aids/cochlear implants (CI) amplify background noise and speech equally. So listening in noise, even just the noise of a normal busy classroom, is more difficult for the pupil. Background noise has a greater impact on CI users than on hearing aid users. As far as possible, insist on quiet while you are addressing the class. Allow the pupil to sit away from any source of noise which will be amplified by the aids (e.g. blow heaters).
- **Support to follow class discussion:** The pupil will have difficulty hearing other pupils' comments or answers to questions in a discussion, particularly if their voice is quiet or they are at the back of the class. It is helpful to develop a strategy of repeating, paraphrasing or summarising other pupils' points of view from a position at the front of the class. It may also be appropriate for the pupil's group to withdraw to a quieter location to work.
- **Position yourself thoughtfully:** The pupil needs to be able to hear and see the teacher easily. Teach from the front as far as possible and avoid moving around the classroom as you speak. Do not talk as you write on the board or stand against a window with your face in shadow. Ensure that the room is well lit.
- **Eye contact:** To help the pupil cue into what is being said from the beginning it is helpful to develop a strategy of engaging her/his eye contact before speaking. A familiar phrase such as "Everyone look this way" can be a useful way of ensuring the pupil gets the message to look up at this point.
- **Visual backup:** Hearing impaired/deaf pupils have more difficulty learning or following when information is **only** presented verbally. Try to ensure keywords; vocabulary and learning objectives are written up so important details are not missed. Homework should be written up as it may be difficult for the pupil to get it down correctly if she/he is only given it verbally.
- **Check comprehension:** Reassure yourself that the pupil understands instructions and is absorbing the new vocabulary in lessons by asking open-ended questions and discussing with her/him. If the pupil asks for extra help be aware this is usually because she/he has **not heard** rather than not listened. Be aware that incidental comments may be missed. Some of the pupil's inaccuracies in spoken and written expression may be due to his/her hearing loss and/or delayed language development.
- **DVD and audio based materials:** These will be harder for the pupil to follow. Try to provide printed versions for the pupil to read the information or subtitled DVDs. It is almost impossible for a deaf person to listen and take notes; she/he will need to look at the speaker in order to access what is being said. In these situations a note taker is needed or alternatively written notes could be provided. Similarly, following reading round the class will be difficult and the pupil may need a prompt to follow other pupils' reading. Information presented via audio tape should ideally be delivered using live voice.
- **FM system:** Some pupils have been issued with a personal radio aid system. The teacher should wear the microphone a hand's span away from their mouth and switch off or mute the microphone when not addressing the pupil directly. Check discretely with the pupil that the system is working. It may be possible to use an audio cable to link the FM directly to computers or TVs.

**N.B. THERE ARE IMPORTANT SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR COCHLEAR IMPLANT USERS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES see 'British Cochlear Implant Group' website.**

## Classroom Practice and Strategies-Support for a deaf student in Secondary School.

- **Positioning:** The student should sit near the front and preferably with a supportive friend. This is essential because hearing aids work most effectively 1-2 metres from the speaker. It is also helpful if the student can sit slightly to one side so that she/he can turn to follow contributions from other students by using lip-reading. She/he will need to look round to locate speakers who are behind her/him.
- **Reduce Background Noise:** Hearing aids/cochlear implants (CI) amplify background noise and speech equally. Therefore listening in noise is more difficult for the student. Background noise has a greater impact on CI users than on hearing aid users. As far as possible, insist on quiet while you are addressing the class. Allow the student to sit away from any source of noise which will be amplified by the aids (e.g. blow heaters). Listening in practical rooms and work shops can be particularly difficult because of the noise of stools scraping and equipment.
- **Support to follow class discussion:** The student will have difficulty hearing other students' comments or answers in a discussion, particularly if their voice is quiet or they are at the back of the class. It is helpful to develop a strategy of repeating, paraphrasing or summarising other students' points of view from a position at the front of the class. It may also be appropriate for the student's group to withdraw to a quieter location to work.
- **Position yourself thoughtfully:** The student needs to be able to hear and see the teacher easily. Teach from the front as far as possible and avoid moving around the class as you speak. Do not talk as you write on the board or stand against a window with your face in shadow. Ensure that the room is well lit.
- **Eye contact:** To help the student cue into what is being said from the beginning it is helpful to develop a strategy of engaging her/his eye contact before speaking. Using a familiar phrase, such as "Everyone look this way", can ensure that the student gets the message to look up at this point.
- **Visual backup:** Deaf students have more difficulty learning or following when information is **only** presented verbally. Try to ensure keywords; vocabulary and learning objectives are written up so important details are not missed. Homework should be written up as it may be difficult for the student to get it down correctly if she/he is only given it verbally.
- **Check comprehension:** Reassure yourself that the student understands instructions and is absorbing the new vocabulary in lessons by asking open-ended questions and discussing with her/him. If the student asks for extra help be aware this is usually because she/he has **not heard** rather than not listened. Be aware that incidental comments may be missed. Some of the student's inaccuracies in spoken and written expression may be due to his/her hearing loss.
- **DVD and audio based materials:** These will be harder for the student to follow. Try to provide printed versions for the student to read the information or subtitled DVDs. It is almost impossible for a deaf person to listen and take notes; she/he will need to look at the speaker in order to access what is being said. In these situations a note taker is needed or alternatively written notes could be provided. Similarly, following reading round the class will be difficult and the student may need a prompt to follow other students' reading. Information presented via audio tape should ideally be delivered using live voice.
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