



Sensory Impairment Service: Supporting Deaf Children in Education Settings

Classroom Practice and Strategies for Deaf Children in Early Years Settings

The following hints and tips give ideas of what nursery and pre-school staff can do to support a young deaf child (0-4 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 speaker's 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 that 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 gestures (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 specific instructions. (Deaf children often 'appear' to hear but might just be 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, facial expressions, and body language.

Classroom Practice and Strategies for Deaf Children in Primary School

Positioning:

The pupil should sit near the front, preferably with a supportive friend. This is essential because hearing aids work most effectively 1-2 metres from the speaker. It is helpful for the pupil to sit slightly to one side so they can look at (and lip-read) other pupils when they speak. They may also need to turn to locate speakers who are behind them.

Reduce Background Noise:

Hearing aids/cochlear implants (CI) amplify background noise and speech equally. Background noise has a greater impact on CI users than on hearing aid users. So listening in noise, even just the noise of a normal busy classroom, is more difficult for the pupil. 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 to engage their eye contact before speaking. Using a familiar phrase such as “Everyone look this way” can be helpful to ensure the pupil gets the message to look up at this point.

Visual Back-Up:

Hearing impaired/deaf pupils have more difficulty learning or following when information is only presented verbally. 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 they’ve only been 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 them. If the pupil asks for extra help, be aware this is usually because they have not heard rather than not listened. Be aware that incidental comments may be missed. Some of the pupil’s inaccuracies in verbal and written expression may be due to their 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. They 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 should 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 Systems:

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 might be possible to use an audio cable to link the FM directly to computers or TVs.

NB: THERE ARE IMPORTANT SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR COCHLEAR IMPLANT USERS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. See the British Cochlear Implant Group’(BCIG) website -

<https://www.bcig.org.uk/>

Classroom Practice and Strategies for Deaf Children in Secondary School

Positioning:

The pupil should sit near the front, 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 pupil can sit slightly to one side so they can turn to follow contributions from other pupils by using lip-reading. They will need to look around to locate speakers who are behind them.

Reduce Background Noise:

Hearing aids/cochlear implants (CI) amplify background noise and speech equally. Therefore listening in noise 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 that could be amplified by the aids (such as blow heaters). Listening in practical rooms and workshops can be particularly difficult because of the noise from the stools scraping and equipment.

Support to Follow Class Discussion:

The pupil will have difficulty hearing other pupils' 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 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 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 pupil cue into what is being said from the beginning, it is helpful to develop a strategy of engaging their eye contact before speaking. Using a familiar phrase, such as "Everyone look this way," can ensure that the pupil gets the message to look up at this point.

Visual Back-Up:

Deaf pupils have more difficulty learning or following when information is only presented verbally. Ensure keywords, vocabulary, and learning objectives are written up so that important details are not missed. Homework should be written up as it may be difficult for the pupil to get it down correctly if they are 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 things with them. If the pupil asks for extra help, be aware this is usually because they have not heard rather than not listened. Be aware that incidental comments may be missed. Some of the pupil's inaccuracies in verbal and written expression may be due to their hearing loss.

DVDs 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. They 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 should 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 Systems:

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/mute the microphone when not addressing the pupil directly. Check discretely with the pupil that the system is working. It might be possible to use an audio cable to link the FM directly to computers or TVs.

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