

Hearing Impairment

It has been estimated that between 1, and 1.2 per thousand children will have a permanent hearing condition significant enough to affect learning. In addition to this many young children will suffer from middle ear congestion, sometimes leading to 'glue ear'. The majority of children with permanent hearing difficulties are identified in their early years prior to beginning school some through the New Born Hearing Screening Programme.

Indications of a Possible Hearing Loss

- The child does not respond when their name is called.
- May respond to name and simple instructions but not much else.
- Slow to respond to verbal instructions - may follow the lead of others.
- Frequently requires repetitions.
- Frequently seeks help from peers.
- Reluctant to answer questions - nods or shakes head instead.
- Speaks very softly.
- Frequently appears to daydream and/or appears dull, uninterested or withdrawn.
- Appears inattentive or restless.
- Noticeably more responsive in individual or small group situations.
- Immature language e.g. missing word endings, or limited vocabulary.
- Persistent colds and catarrh.
- Complains about earache and/or history of ear infections.

Low level hearing difficulties would not be expected to have any educational impact in most situations, though the school would expect to take cognisance of the hearing condition through its ordinary record-keeping procedures. Such children would be accommodated through the 'ordinary differentiated curriculum'. Improved curriculum access might be achieved through a variety of differentiation methods such as

- Organization of different seating positions.
- Increased use of awareness raising techniques.
- Periodic checking of understanding of lesson content.
- Improving the acoustic environment (for example increased use of carpeting, amplified classrooms).

Information, training, and advice can be requested from the Hearing Support Service

Children with **severe or profound hearing losses** might require those strategies outlined above and in addition the Hearing Support Service would offer:

- Higher levels of delivery of specialist curriculum.
- Close monitoring by Hearing Support Service staff.
- In class support for specific curriculum areas.
- Advice for IEP targets.

Cochlea implants result in improved hearing levels which leads to greater clarity of speech but the rate of progress cannot be predicted. Experience with the current cohort suggests a very favourable prognosis for the longer-term future, but it is too early to make any generalisations.