Creating good listening conditions for learning in education – Practical suggestions for mainstream teachers

Introduction

These practical suggestions aim to help mainstream teachers ensure that all children, and especially those who may have a temporary or permanent hearing loss, can listen and learn effectively in your classroom.

How intelligible your speech is to children in your class will depend on three critical factors:

1) The extent to which background noise can be reduced or eliminated
2) The acoustic quality of the room, meaning the extent to which sound reverberates (or echoes) in the class. The greater the levels of reverberation, the less pupils will be able to hear you
3) The extent to which you modify your teaching style to the listening requirements of pupils with additional needs, such as those with a permanent or a temporary hearing loss (including glue ear).

For a simulation of what a noisy classroom with poor acoustics sounds like to a deaf child, visit: www.ndcs.org.uk/simulation

Top tips for classroom teachers

1) Consider seating arrangements
   - Think about the distance a deaf child is from you when you are delivering the lesson. They will, need to see your face for lipreading.

2) Consult the Teacher of the Deaf on how to ensure the best use is made of any hearing equipment such as hearing aids or cochlear implants
   - Check hearing equipment is functioning.
   - Find out how to troubleshoot any problems.
   - Learn how to use a radio aid where one is supplied.
   - Develop the ability of pupils to manage their own equipment.

3) Reduce noise from outside the school by:
   - closing windows
   - trying to place a class with a deaf child as far as possible from any noise source (for example, not next to a playing field, road, building works, etc.).
4) Reduce noise from within the school by:

- closing doors
- putting up displays in corridors and halls, especially including fabric in their construction.

5) Reduce noise in the classroom by:

- thinking about sound control during lessons
- using fabric on displays and display tables
- seating deaf child away from noise sources (for example, not next to heating / ventilation systems, etc.)
- sticking soft pads on the bottom of chair and table legs
- using a soundfield system if available
- turning off equipment when not being used (for example, IWB projector)
- providing quiet areas.

Resources for creating good listening conditions

Apps
There are a range of apps available to support good listening conditions. Two examples recommended to the National Deaf Children’s Society by Teachers of the Deaf are:

- Silent Light app – uses a traffic light graphic to visually represent the noise level in the classroom. It will turn red when pre-chosen noise levels (depending on the activity) are exceeded. A rewards counter keeps track of the points that are awarded for times of quiet activity. [itunes.apple.com/gb/app/silent-light-classroom-timer/id657863900?mt=8](itunes.apple.com/gb/app/silent-light-classroom-timer/id657863900?mt=8)
- Too Noisy Pro app – graphically displays the background noise level in a room. It helps the class to monitor their own noise levels and when levels are acceptable it displays a smiling face. At times when the predefined noise levels are exceeded an audible alarm goes off and the app appears to shatter the screen. [itunes.apple.com/gb/app/id521646496?mt=8&affId=1720307](itunes.apple.com/gb/app/id521646496?mt=8&affId=1720307)

Here to Learn
*Here to Learn* is a series of video clips produced by the National Deaf Children’s Society for mainstream school staff who have little or no experience of working with deaf children. The clips include ‘Reducing background noise’ and ‘Good acoustics’. [www.ndcs.org.uk/heretolearn](www.ndcs.org.uk/heretolearn)

Supporting Achievement
The National Deaf Children’s Society has produced a range of resources for teachers to improve outcomes for deaf children in mainstream settings, including in early year settings, schools and colleges. These include information on other steps that can be taken to ensure effective inclusion. [www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement](www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement)
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National Union of Teachers (NUT) briefing
The National Union of Teachers has produced a health and safety briefing on acoustics in schools that teachers may find helpful. www.teachers.org.uk/help-and-advice/health-and-safety/a

About the National Deaf Children’s Society

The National Deaf Children’s Society is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people across the UK.

We use the term ‘deaf’ to refer to all types of hearing loss or impairment from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear or temporary deafness such as glue ear.

We use the word ‘parent’ to refer to all parents and carers of children.

For more information for professionals visit our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/professionals
For information to support parents visit www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support

For information and practical support on issues related to childhood deafness, contact the National Deaf Children’s Society Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880, email us at helpline@ndcs.org.uk or contact us via live chat at www.ndcs.org.uk/livechat.

If you or a family you are supporting prefer to speak a language other than English, once we know the language of choice and phone number (in English) we can call back with an interpreter within a few minutes.

This information can be requested in large print or as a text file.

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Full references for this factsheet are available by emailing informationteam@ndcs.org.uk

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