

Summary

To ensure that pupils with a hearing impairment receive the required standard of support to access the curriculum, access teaching and learning and make good progress, the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) recommends that:

- 1) The review panel gives careful consideration to standards of support, training mentoring and supervision of teaching assistants who support pupils with low incidence needs such as hearing impairment. Pupils with a hearing loss have a wide range of needs but many managers in mainstream schools have not had the opportunity to gain sufficient knowledge and experience of successfully supporting such pupils. Hence, their ability to give well-informed professional direction to the teaching assistant will be more limited than for other types of higher incidence needs. Local authority specialist sensory support services have an important role to play in providing this knowledge and expertise. In order to ensure that school managers and teaching assistants receive the necessary support, a possible approach may be to set out standards regarding the level of support that they should receive from local authority specialist sensory support services.
- 2) The review panel considers the introduction of a mandatory minimum qualification for communication support workers who provide interpretation support for pupils who are signers and require signed support to access education. This will ensure that, unlike now, future generations of such pupils will at least receive assistance from a support worker who can accurately interpret what teachers, pupils and other school staff are saying.
- 3) In addition to any generic standards for teaching assistants, the review panel consider developing specific standards for those teaching assistants supporting pupils with low incidence needs such as a hearing impairment. This is to ensure that specific needs relating to hearing loss and the implications for teaching and learning are recognised and met.

The following may be outside the remit of the review panel but it may be necessary to:

- 4) Consider whether the existing pay and conditions structure for adult support allows appropriate remuneration for the specific levels of skills and training required to meet required standards of competence (for example, communication support workers who require a level 3 qualification in sign language to effectively support pupils who sign).
- 5) The most effective models of delivering a teaching assistant workforce capable of meeting minimum standards of competence for supporting pupils with low incidence needs such as hearing impairment. For example, this could be a team of teaching assistants and communication support workers who are part of a local authority's specialist sensory support service, deployed across schools as needed. Such a model would take account of the low incidence of need and the specific competencies required from support staff to meet the needs of pupils with a hearing impairment.

1. CONTEXT

- 1.1 Deafness is not a cognitive disability and pupils with a hearing impairment cover the whole range of ability. They have the same potential to attain and achieve as any other pupils given the right levels of support and access to the curriculum by their teachers and other

adults who support them. However, as most children learn through hearing, having a hearing impairment presents complex learning challenges to children and those who teach them.

- 1.2 This challenge is compounded by the fact that hearing impairment is a low incidence but also a very diverse need. Thus, for example, pupils with hearing impairment will have different communication preferences (signers/non signers), use different types of hearing technologies and have different communication and language delays that depend on the age of onset of the hearing loss and when it was diagnosed. This means that many mainstream teachers, including SENCOs, have not gained the training or experience in working with children with hearing impairment or lack opportunities to retain this expertise. Their ability to train and direct the work of other adults who support pupils with a hearing impairment is likely to be far less than it is for other higher incidence types of SEN.
- 1.3 Hearing technologies are still a poor substitute for normal hearing and pupils using equipment will still miss a lot of what is being said. Neither will they experience the same opportunities for incidental learning that are afforded to other children. Effective support requires much more than giving access to what the teacher is saying. It requires careful assessment of needs and planned programmes of support to address the learning difficulties resulting from the hearing loss particularly in the areas of language, communication and literacy.

2. ROLE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT

- 2.1 Working with the National Sensory Impairment Partnership¹, the NDCS has identified two key roles for teaching assistants that support pupils with a hearing impairment:
 - (i) Work with teachers to support the learning, educational progress and inclusion of pupil(s) with a hearing impairment, with the aim of narrowing any attainment gap they have with their hearing peers on entry to school.
 - (ii) Give assistance to pupil(s) or student(s) with a hearing impairment so that they can access the curriculum, participate in learning, experience a sense of achievement and develop independence in learning and other aspects of school life.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 lists in more detail the recommended main duties of a teaching assistant who supports pupils with hearing impairment.

Pupils requiring support in sign language

- 2.3 If the pupil requires signed support, the teaching assistant's role is also to support access to the curriculum and participation in the life of the school by communicating between spoken English and British Sign Language or Signed Supported English depending on the pupil's communication preference. Depending on the needs of the pupil, it may also be necessary to (i) translate written documents into signed versions or what the pupil is signing into writing and/or (ii) voice over what a deaf pupil is saying if their speech is difficult to understand.
- 2.4 In these circumstances, for the pupil to access learning and make progress, support will be required from an appropriately qualified communication support worker.

¹ A partnership between local authorities, schools, professional organisations (such as the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf and View) and voluntary organisations (e.g. RNIB, SENSE, NDCS, Ewing, Ear Foundation). Its aim is to work in partnership to improve outcomes for all children and young people with a sensory impairment. Its work is supported and funded by the Department for Education.

3. REQUIRED EXPERIENCE, SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT OF PUPILS WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT

3.1 In addition to generic standards of competence that the review panel may identify for teaching assistants, it is likely that there are required levels of competences for teaching assistants that are specific to supporting pupils with a hearing impairment. These include:

- a) A good understanding of the needs of pupils with a hearing impairment, the impact on learning and the support required to ensure they make progress and feel included.
- b) A good knowledge of hearing technology including:
 - (i) its benefits, limitations and conditions for effective use; and
 - (ii) how to maintain equipment, check it is functioning and troubleshoot, undertaking basic repairs.
- c) A good understanding of the respective roles of the class / subject teacher and the teaching assistant and specialist roles e.g. Teacher of the Deaf, audiologist, speech and language therapist.
- d) Ability to take full, accurate and legible notes during lessons on behalf of the pupil so that they have a good written record (This is required where pupils with a hearing impairment cannot take notes and lip read the teacher or follow the interpreter at the same time).
- e) A knowledge and understanding of how to communicate effectively with pupils with a hearing impairment.
- f) An ability to establish an appropriate balance between supporting the pupil to complete a task while encouraging independent learning and ensuring the pupil has full understanding of the learning points of the lesson. This is a generic attribute but is particularly important when supporting pupils with a hearing impairment.
- g) An ability to adapt materials and resources for lessons for hearing impaired pupils.
- h) An ability to contribute to the planning and identification of strategies to meet the hearing impaired pupil's needs and the confidence to contribute with ideas based on detailed knowledge gained through supporting the pupil.
- i) An ability to observe and report to the teacher / SENCO / Teacher of the Deaf on pupil progress, gathering information about their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- j) An ability to observe, record and report to the teacher / SENCO / Teacher of the Deaf the pupil's social and emotional development and his/her social relationships with other pupils.

Pupils requiring signed support

3.2 It is crucial that the adult supporting a pupil who uses British Sign Language (BSL) and/or Signed Supported English is able to accurately interpret what is being said and can evidence this with the required qualification in BSL. This requires a qualified communication support worker with a level 3 qualification in BSL. A support worker with a level 2² qualification will not be able to interpret the language used by teachers in secondary school

² A level 2 qualification in BSL roughly equates to a GCSE in English.

lessons and could struggle to interpret much of the language used in primary schools. A Level 3 NVQ in BSL is the **minimum** required to give reasonable access to the curriculum.

- 3.3 If the student requires support from a qualified sign interpreter to access the curriculum that person must have a relevant interpreting qualification.

Cued Speech³

- 3.4 If a pupil uses cued speech to develop language, then the ability to use cued speech to the required level of competence would need to be incorporated into the specification for the teaching assistant job.

4. SUGGESTED ISSUES FOR THE REVIEW PANEL TO CONSIDER

Professional support and advice for teaching assistants supporting pupils with a hearing impairment

- 4.1 As hearing impairment is a low incidence need, many school teaching staff, including SENCOs, will not have had the opportunity to undertake training or gain experience in supporting pupils with a hearing loss. This means that they are less likely to be able to provide effective support, training and advice to the teaching assistant. Indeed it is often the teaching assistant with limited training who becomes the person in school with the most expertise. In some cases, local authority specialist sensory support services are able to provide sufficient support and advice but the capacity of services to do this is variable and sometimes limited.
- 4.2 NDCS therefore recommend that the review consider standards relating to the support, mentoring and professional direction of teaching assistants who support pupils with low incidence needs such as hearing impairment so that they can provide effective support. NDCS also recommends that the panel also considers models and standards of delivery for such support and the expected role of local authority specialist sensory support services as part of this.

Qualifications of staff supporting pupils who sign

- 4.3 Access to education is a basic human right for all children so it is important that those who rely on sign to access education are supported by adults who can interpret accurately what is being said in lessons.
- 4.4 However this is not currently the case. The I-Sign consortium, funded by the Department for Education, has found that the majority of applications for support from the fund for the upskilling of communication support workers were for communication support workers qualified to Level 2, all of whom had been working as a communication support worker for over 6 months and some for several years. Additionally, an NDCS survey in 2008 survey of parents whose child had a communication support worker found that only 3% were qualified to Level 3 and 78% only having Level 1, worth less than GCSE.
- 4.5 It is therefore recommended that the panel considers a mandatory qualification and the implications this has for training and supply of suitable qualified communication support workers. In this respect the review panel should note that the Department for Education is currently funding the I-Sign consortium to develop a communication support worker qualification.

³ Cued Speech uses eight hand-shapes in four different positions near the mouth to clarify the lip patterns of normal speech. For a fuller definition of cued speech see <http://www.cuedspeech.co.uk/>

More information:

National Sensory Impairment Partnership (2012): Raising the achievement of pupils with a hearing impairment: effective working with teaching assistants in schools. Available online at: www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=6928

Appendix 3 of the NatSIP resource includes a range of case studies which may be of interest to the panel.

APPENDIX 1.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES/DUTIES OF A TEACHING ASSISTANT SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT⁴

Supporting the Teacher in the Planning, Delivery and Evaluation of Lessons

- 1) Work in partnership with the teacher in the planning of lessons including the adaptations, materials and support hearing impaired pupils will need to be included and make progress.
- 2) Support the delivery of learning by:
 - Providing support as agreed with the teacher (and Teacher of the Deaf). This may include pre-tutoring support to ensure pupils have the necessary knowledge and familiarity with the vocabulary and concepts used in the lesson. It may also involve post-tutoring to check understanding, and reinforce key learning points.
 - Obtaining and using the agreed learning resources, adapting resources and teaching materials as necessary so that the pupil is able to access the key ideas of a lesson and achieve the objectives set for him or her.
 - Supporting the pupil(s) in following instructions.
 - Using praise, assistance and encouragement to motivate the pupil(s) and to help them stay on task.
 - Supporting the pupil(s) understanding of any follow up tasks set by the teacher.
 - Taking lesson notes, if required, to support deaf pupils' understanding of what is being said and the pupils' own record of lessons as deaf pupils may experience difficulty in lip reading what the teacher says and take notes at the same time.
- 3) Support the class or subject teacher in evaluating the deaf pupils' learning and access by:
 - Providing constructive feedback to the teacher on the how the deaf pupil has responded to the lesson.
 - Discussing with the teacher any difficulties experienced in providing the support the pupil(s) needed.
 - Providing information on how well the child is engaging in the lesson, any difficulties they appear to be experiencing, work they find relatively easy and work they find more difficult.

Implementing Individual Learning Programmes for Pupils

- 4) Support the development and implementation of individual learning programmes focused on delivering priority learning targets for pupils. (These might include work in the areas of language, literacy, personal, social and emotional development and numeracy as required). This will be achieved by:

⁴ Extracted from the NatSIP Guidance – Effective working with Teaching Assistants

- Working with the SENCO, class or subject teacher, and Teacher of the Deaf and other specialists where appropriate to plan and agree the programme which contains clear, challenging but achievable objectives for the pupil.
- Delivering the agreed programmes, under the guidance of the teacher, SENCO and the Teacher of the Deaf, focussing on(to be specified depending on the age and needs of the pupil but they are likely to include language, literacy and numeracy).
- Providing feedback to relevant colleagues about the pupil's progress towards targets and the effectiveness of the programme in securing this and the pupil's engagement.

Observing and Reporting on Pupil Progress

- 5) Observe and report on pupil progress, gathering information about their knowledge, skills and understanding, including their progress towards targets to support teachers in re-assessing need, evaluating teaching strategies and interventions, setting new learning targets and formulating new learning plans.

Contributing to Maintaining Pupil Records

- 6) Contribute to the maintenance of pupil records as agreed with the teacher and/or SENCO and help to maintain the record keeping system.

Using Technology to Support Pupils' (or the Pupil's) Learning

- 7) Support the use of hearing aids and other technology to promote pupil's learning by:
 - Checking that the pupil's personal hearing technology is functioning (*in primary schools this would be daily and more frequently for the youngest children*).
 - Taking steps to ensure any problems with equipment are dealt with as quickly as possible.
 - Making sure that the technology is available and functioning and promptly informing the teacher/technician if there are any problems.
 - Checking the technology is switched on and ready for use and undertake basic maintenance and repairs.
 - Support the pupil(s) and staff in the use of technology encouraging pupils to use the equipment independently.

Supporting Children's Emotional and Social Development

- 8) Support social and emotional development by:
 - Supporting positive behaviour giving praise and encouragement as appropriate to build confidence and self esteem.
 - Provide support to enable the pupil(s) to have the opportunities to participate in all school activities, to make choices and take decisions for themselves.
 - Encouraging pupils to evaluate their own progress and to take an active part in reviews of their progress, when appropriate.

- Observing how pupils express their feelings and emotions and relate to others and feedback to the teacher and/or SENCO, recording any findings accurately.
- Delivering programmes designed by specialists to support this area as appropriate.

Listening Environment and Learning Environment

9. Working with colleagues to ensure the classroom and its layout provides a good listening environment.

Liaising with Parents

10. Support teachers and SENCOs discharge their responsibility in involving parents by providing information on the pupil's engagement with learning and interactions with other pupils and helping to maintain home-school liaison records.

Continuing Professional Development

11. Participate in training and other learning activities to develop the competencies to effectively support deaf pupils and to ensure knowledge and skills are kept up to date.