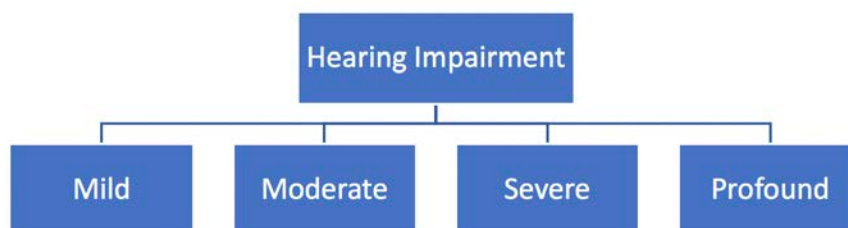


11. Hearing Impairment

Hearing impairment is a broad term used to describe different levels of hearing loss. It can be caused by hereditary factors, or as a consequence of health problems experienced by women and young children.



Mild: the pupil hears nearly all speech, but may mishear if not looking directly at the speaker or if the classroom is noisy.

Moderate: the pupil will have difficulty hearing anyone speaking who is not close by.

Severe: the pupil will not be able to cope without a hearing aid, and even with one will rely on visual clues such as lip reading and body language to gain information.

Profound: the pupil may be helped by a hearing aid, but will rely mainly on visual clues or sign language (if they have learned it) to communicate.

Most of the pupils that you encounter in school will have mild to moderate hearing loss. Here are some of the common signs of hearing impairment to look out for with your pupils in the classroom:

- Poor attention
- Poor speech development – this might result in immature, unusual or distorted speech or a pupil talking in a very loud or soft voice
- Difficulty in following instructions
- A pupil watching what other children are doing before starting their own work
- Inappropriate answers to questions, or failing to answer
- Shy, withdrawn or stubborn and disobedient pupils
- Reluctance to participate in oral activities, or failure to laugh at jokes or understand humour
- A pupil isolating themselves from social activities
- A pupil complaining of frequent earaches, colds or sore throats



What can you do as a teacher to support pupils with a hearing impairment?

- Sit the pupil as close as possible to you
- Make sure you stand or sit facing the pupil. Do not cover your face with a book when reading or talk when you are writing on the board

- Make sure light does not come from behind you, as your face will be in shadow and the pupil will be unable to lip read
- Speak clearly and loudly but without shouting or exaggerating
- Use simple words and sentences along with gestures or pictures to help the pupil understand what you are saying
- Check with the pupil that they understand what they are expected to do
- Provide written instructions for the pupil when necessary
- Pair the pupil with a pupil who can hear well. The partner will be able to repeat your instructions or make sure the pupil has heard correctly



Pupils with severe or profound hearing loss

Pupils with severe or profound hearing loss will probably require more specialist help, although the strategies listed above will also help them, especially those relating to sign language, gestures, pictures and body language.



What can you do as a teacher to help pupils with severe hearing loss?

- Talk to your head teacher about any pupils in your class with very little hearing. If their hearing impairment has not been formally diagnosed, they will need to be referred to a health worker or educational assessment centre.
- You might also discuss whether it might be possible for you to learn sign language.
- Talk to other teachers in your school or other schools nearby who have experience of teaching pupils with hearing impairment. They will be able to share with you the strategies that they have found to work well.

References:

Adapted from: Viv East and Linda Evans (2006 edition) *At a Glance – A practical guide to Children's Special Needs*, London: Continuum and

UNESCO (2001) *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*, France: UNESCO

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Acknowledgements

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Extracts from *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms*: McConkey, R. et al. (2001) *Understanding and Responding to Children's Needs in Inclusive Classrooms. A Guide for Teachers*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. © UNESCO 2001.

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