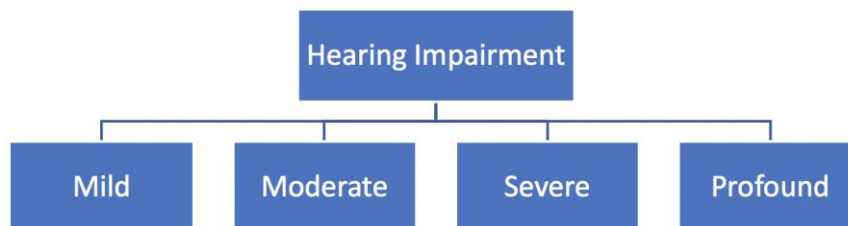


4b. Hearing impairment



Hearing impairment is a broad term used to describe different levels of hearing loss. It can be caused by hereditary factors or by health problems experienced by women and young children. Children with hearing impairment vary widely in their communication skills. Any hearing impairment can affect a girl's educational performance if not well managed.



Mild: the girl hears nearly all speech but may mishear if not looking directly at the speaker or if the learning environment is noisy.

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

Severe: the girl 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 girl 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 girls 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 girls in the classroom:

- poor attention
- poor speech development – this might result in immature, unusual or distorted speech, or talking in a very loud or soft voice
- difficulty in following instructions
- watching what other girls are doing before starting their own work
- inappropriate answers to questions, or failing to answer
- shy, withdrawn or stubborn and disobedient
- reluctance to participate in oral activities, or failure to laugh at jokes or understand humour
- a girl isolating themselves from social activities
- a girl complaining of frequent earaches, colds or sore throats



What can you do to support girls with a hearing impairment?

Physical

- Get to know the girl and find out about their hearing issues. This may be from the girl themselves, or from others who know her. Each girl's needs are unique; however, the following strategies will be helpful.
- Background noise can be a profound barrier for young people with hearing impairment. This can include the noise of others in the Hub and nearby traffic. Can you reduce this noise or 'schedule' it in any way? For example, so that your instructions to the group can be heard (*before* girls move around or a truck arrives) and ensuring that small groups use turn taking in their work together.
The girl will be greatly helped if they can see your face and body movement, for example when you are giving instructions to the group. So be aware of the lighting in the room. Does it help or hinder the girl? Ask them and be prepared to try out different ways of seating with respect to the lighting in the Hub.
- Make sure strong light does not come from behind you, as your face will be in shadow and the girl will be unable to lip read.
- Where possible make sure you stand or sit facing the girl. Do not cover your face with a book when reading or talk when you are writing on the board
- For some activities it may be helpful to sit the girl as close as possible.
- Check that you are heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the girl. Try not to talk to the girl, or present information to the group, when turned away from them.

Social

- Speak clearly and at a good volume but without shouting or exaggerating.
- Use simple words and sentences along with gestures or pictures to help the girl understand what you are saying.
- Use body language and expression to highlight points within your speech.
- Think about who the girl is sat near or working with. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions and friendships, and engagement with the learning activities?
- Pair the girl with a friend who can hear well. The partner will be able to repeat your instructions or make sure the girl has heard correctly.
- Check with the girl that they understand what they are expected to do.
- Can the girl signal to you or your assistant when clarification is needed in a way that is discrete?
- When you are working with the whole hub, or larger groups, indicate clearly to a girl and say their name. This is very helpful in orientating the girl towards the person who is speaking next.
- In group work, arrange the girls so that they can see each other's faces. Make sure that they all take turns when speaking and get into the habit of signalling before they speak.

Activities

- Do you need to differentiate an activity so that the girl can complete it successfully? For example:
 - a) Provide written instructions for the girl when necessary to support the activity.
 - b) Children with hearing impairments are likely to become tired much more quickly than their peers and may be tired during your activities. They will be concentrating hard to listen and follow the activities. You may need to timetable activities that require the most concentration early on, build in breaks and adapt your activities to include tasks that lessen the need for concentrating on what is being said by yourself or in the girl's group.
 - c) Think about the *number* of verbal instructions that you are delivering. Can these be reduced or supported visually? For example, a simple visual pictorial timetable of a planned series of activities can be very helpful. Children with hearing impairment often rely on sight to obtain information hence strong visual teaching methods are useful for them.
- Can another adult helper support group activities, e.g. in taking notes or clarifying tasks? This can be very helpful because children with a hearing impairment find it very challenging to take notes (i.e. looking down) whilst still following the educator (i.e. looking up).

- Some reading activities, such as those to develop phonological awareness, are particularly challenging for children who are deaf or have a hearing impairment. Children with profound hearing impairment often have significant delays in learning to read and their progress may be slower, as they rely more on the visual component of speech to link with the written symbols. If this is the case for one of your girls, it may be helpful for them to sit near you during literacy activities so they have detailed sight of your face during reading activities.

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<https://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=2579>

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