

# Supplementary guidance: Hearing impairment

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Autumn 2022

This guidance is also available in Welsh.

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- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ▲ primary schools
- ▲ secondary schools
- ▲ all-age schools
- ▲ special schools
- ▲ pupil referral units
- ▲ independent schools
- ▲ further education
- ▲ independent specialist colleges
- ▲ adult community learning
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people
- ▲ teacher education and training
- ▲ Welsh for adults
- ▲ work-based learning
- ▲ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

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**What is the purpose?**

To provide guidance to inspectors on the considerations to be given in respect of learners with hearing impairment.

**For whom is it intended?**

All inspectors of maintained and independent schools and post-16 education.

**From when should the guidance be used?**

From September 2022.

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## Supplementary guidance

Our [inspection guidance](#) explains 'What we inspect' and 'How we inspect'. However, we also produce supplementary guidance to help inspectors to consider specific aspects of education and training further.

The supplementary guidance documents set out some key principles, considerations and resources for inspectors. They relate to all sectors that Estyn inspects, unless they state that they are for a specific sector. They expand on certain aspects of education/training (e.g. the inspection of literacy) or on ways of conducting inspections (e.g. the use of learning walks) or specific inspection arrangements (e.g. guidance on inspecting church schools).

The supplementary guidance documents do not aim to be comprehensive. Inspectors are not required to work through them exhaustively when covering any specific aspect on an inspection. However, inspectors may find them useful when responding to specific emerging questions that arise during inspections or when they wish to reflect or investigate further.

The supplementary guidance documents may help providers gain an understanding of Estyn's inspection arrangements. They may also be helpful to providers in evaluating specific aspects of their own provision.

Our inspection work is based on the following principles:

- Inspectors will approach inspection with a positive mindset to ensure it is the best possible professional learning experience for the staff in each provider
- Inspectors will take a learner-focused approach to inspection
- Inspectors will always focus strongly on the quality of teaching and learning
- Inspectors will seek out well-considered innovative practice
- Inspectors will tailor the inspection activities according to the circumstances in each provider as far as possible
- Inspectors will be agile and responsive to emerging findings and will use the increased range of inspection tools and approaches available
- Inspectors will consider everything in the inspection framework, but will only report on the key strengths and weaknesses within each provider

**Estyn has worked with the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) in order to develop this guidance.**

## 1 Introduction

The information contained in the following sections complements the information contained in the supplementary guidance on additional learning needs (ALN). The information that follows is specific to a particular additional learning need and/or disability.

The reporting inspector will be aware of the ALN profile within a school and will make suitable provision during the inspection for the following enquiries to be made. All members of the inspection team need to be aware of the general considerations for effective classroom practice and should judge the effectiveness of pupils' standards and teaching in relation to pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), individual development plans (IDPs) or statements of SEN.

We have used the term 'additional learning needs', but we acknowledge that 'special educational needs' may also be used in this context during the period of implementation of reforms.

## 2 Definitions

- Hearing impairment is not a learning disability and, as such, expectations for hearing impaired learners should be no different from that of other learners.
- Hearing impairments can be mild, moderate, severe or profound.
- A hearing loss in one ear is known as unilateral.
- Many learners will also be significantly affected by temporary hearing impairment as a result of glue ear.
- It is important to recognise that any level of hearing loss, permanent or temporary, has an impact on a pupil's learning experience and access requirements.
- Hearing impaired children may use a variety of hearing technologies including digital hearing aids, cochlear implants, bone anchored hearing aids, personal FM systems or soundfield systems. While these devices improve access to sound, no hearing technology replaces normal hearing.
- Hearing impaired learners may use a variety of communication methods, including oral language and lip-reading, Sign Supported English/Welsh or British Sign Language (BSL).
- Alternative terms for a hearing impairment include deafness or hearing loss.

## Inspection area 1: Learning

### General considerations on effective classroom practice for children with a hearing impairment.

#### Are pupils...?

- Able to follow the instructions of staff?
- Developing their skills including being able to work independently?
- Developing in their confidence and becoming resourceful in supporting their own learning?
- Able to engage in meaningful dialogue with staff and other pupils?
- Able to identify if they have achieved learning objectives of lessons?
- Developing age-appropriate language and vocabulary?
- Developing age-appropriate social skills?

#### **BSL in the curriculum**

More schools are able to teach BSL as a language due to changes as part of Curriculum for Wales reforms.

BSL may be a first language for some learners, whereas others may learn BSL as a third or subsequent language.

BSL should be considered in the context of the Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) Area of Learning and Experience (AOLE). BSL specific information has been added to the [progression steps](#) in the LLC AoLE. There are currently no statutory assessments in BSL and a GCSE in BSL is not currently available.

Schools and colleges should have ensured the teaching skillset and fluency of BSL tutors. Tutors should generally be qualified to at least two levels above that which they are teaching. The NDCS recommend a minimum of BSL at level 3.

BSL has strong cultural links with the Deaf Community and schools may benefit from reaching out to local Deaf Clubs or support services.

### Inspection area 3: Teaching and learning experiences

#### General considerations on effective classroom practice for children with a hearing impairment.

#### Do teachers/support staff...?

- Ensure they have a hearing impaired learner's attention before speaking?
- Facilitate lip-reading by facing the class when speaking, avoiding having their backs to a window, and not placing the speaker in shadow?
- Repeat what other pupils say?
- Make it clear when there is a new topic of conversation?
- Speak normally and clearly? Shouting or speaking slowly can distort lip patterns and many hearing impaired learners rely on lip-reading.
- Ensure that a hearing impaired learner is keeping-up with the lesson?
- Ensure that pupils are able to follow group work/group discussion? It is better for group discussions to take place in a circle, with speakers taking turns to comment and each speaker being identified before they speak.
- Ensure that instructions for homework are written and provided to the pupil?
- Have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils? Are they able to assist in developing new skills and understanding? Do they develop pupils' independence skills appropriately? Do support staff have sufficient knowledge of the subject being taught?
- Know how to operate and undertake basic troubleshooting of relevant hearing technology that the pupil uses, e.g. a radio aid or soundfield system?
- Ensure that resources and methods of delivery are suitably adapted to make the curriculum accessible to learners?
- Ensure that extra-curricular activities or after school clubs are accessible to hearing impaired learners?

#### Helpful ideas for adapting resources and teaching

Sound-based lessons, such as phonics, languages and music, require careful consideration and should be supported by visual aids whenever possible. Pre-teaching of the points covered in the lesson can also be helpful.

Using a blended combination of online, digital and face to face teaching helps give multi-sensory access to the curriculum for pupils with a hearing impairment.

Video resources or internet based homework must be accessible, e.g. subtitles.

Lip-reading requires great concentration and can be tiring. Learners should not be expected to lip-read for extensive periods of time. Teachers should also be mindful that a lip-reader will not be able to follow speech and take notes simultaneously.

Hearing impaired learners often experience difficulties with working and auditory memory and may require extra thinking time.

Allow time for hearing impaired children to look at visual aids before talking about them.

Discussing lesson plans with support staff ahead of time can assist accessibility.

#### **Inspection area 4: Care, support and guidance**

- Does attainment data for hearing impaired learners demonstrate that progress is being made?
- Does any additional support take place in an appropriate and quiet environment/location?
- Has the school taken good enough account of the needs of pupils in adapting the physical environment?
- How does the school encourage hearing impaired pupils to adopt a positive attitude to their hearing impairment?
- Does the school provide opportunities for hearing impaired pupils to meet other hearing impaired young people, where appropriate?
- Are appropriate control measures identified in risk assessments to ensure that pupils with a hearing impairment are not disadvantaged? For example, pupils with a hearing impairment may not hear an audible fire alarm.

#### **Helpful ideas for adapting the environment**

Sitting pupils with a hearing impairment where they can both see and hear the teacher, and identify other speakers in the class.

The use of soft-furnishings to improve acoustics and reduce sound reverberation.

Minimising background noise.

The confident and consistent use of any relevant technology, such as radio aids or soundfield systems.

## Inspection area 5: Leadership and management

### Do leaders in the school...?

- Set high expectations for hearing impaired learners?
- Ensure that all staff have received basic deaf awareness training?
- Ensure that relevant staff have an appropriate qualification for working with hearing impaired children? Where there is a local authority specialist class, is there a qualified teacher of the deaf? (A specialist with a post-graduate qualification to teach hearing impaired children.) Where a learner uses BSL, does the pupil have support from a professional with a minimum of BSL level 3?
- Raise awareness and understanding with hearing pupils and parents?