**Pupils with a Hearing Impairment**

**Response to Covid 19**

**Due to Covid 19, the sensory support service will be restricted in the number of visits to schools to monitor pupils with a hearing impairment. Arrangements for the visit will be in consultation with the member of staff responsible for co ordinating these procedures. Should there be a pupil who requires direct support in your school, there will be separate arrangements put in place.**

**Until these changes are set up and the visit takes place, please refer to previous individual reports for the hearing-impaired pupils in your school.**

**Update March 2021**

**Masks**

As pupils and staff in s1 – s6 are now required to wear masks, please note the following:

The latest research about most suitable type of mask can be viewed at <https://fb.watch/45GwSKSmPp/> It indicates that surgical masks are the best for sound quality. The window masks allow for lipreading however these have been shown to negatively impact sound quality more than the surgical ones.

It is highly recommended that pupils issued with radio systems use them and that the microphone is worn closer to the speaker’s mouth than normal, to compensate for the muffle from the mask.

As some senior pupils are finding it helpful, information about using **speech to text apps** with devices such as mobile phones, can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFt1A4fCSkk> This is a video from Joe O’Donnell, educational audiologist, showing how to use the Roger Pen with the **Otter app and Live Transcribe app**.

Generally, pupils with a hearing impairment greatly appreciate being discreetly asked if they are following the lesson when masks are being worn.

Further information, including guidelines on removing mask for communication with a person with a hearing impairment, is on the Sensory Support website at https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshiresensoryteam/2020/08/10/covid-19-update/

Classroom environment

* If it has been possible to reduce class sizes, quieter rooms should mean pupils with a hearing impairment are able to listen better due to reduced background noise, however the pupil still needs to be **near the class teacher**. If social distancing means they are further away, the pupil may not hear the teacher or other classmates’ contributions.
* Pupils with a hearing impairment cannot lipread people wearing masks.

On line material

* Be mindful of the language needs of the pupil, they may not have the same degree of understanding as hearing peers.
* Be aware some pupils may find accessing videos and auditory feedback difficult. With these pupils, videos used to support learning should be subtitled, please consider alternative resources if subtitles are not available. Using speech to give feedback about a pupil’s work could be difficult especially if audio only. Please consider video comments with written support. Be aware that the closed captions that can be switched on when using Teams etc can, at times, lag behind the speech and be a little inaccurate.
* When using video teaching, ensure you are facing the light source to avoid being in shadow and making it difficult to lip reading.

Outdoor Learning

* Sound travels less well outside, so teachers conducting outdoor learning should take this into account and check that the pupil has understood all instructions and/or information. Pupils could benefit from instructions inside before going out and/or having a whiteboard with visual instructions.
* Please be aware that equipment, such as cochlear implants and hearing aids, are not waterproof.
* Windy weather can make it harder to hear.
* Be mindful that hearing can be affected by hay fever and other allergies.

Equipment

* Issues concerning radio systems – procedures for using, cleaning and passing to staff is available at

**https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshiresensoryteam/2020/08/10/covid-19-update/**

**General Guidelines Pupils with a Hearing Impairment**

* Seat the pupil where the pupil has a good view of your face and can hear you most clearly (being near the front of the class usually helps). Speak clearly and at a steady pace as speaking quickly can be difficult to understand. It helps the pupil to watch and listen to natural speech, please try not to shout or exaggerate your mouth shapes.
* Avoid speaking when facing the board, doing a practical demonstration or with your back to the pupil. If the pupil cannot focus on your face, for instance during a practical demonstration, repeat what you have said when the pupil can watch you.
* Light should be on your face. It is more difficult to lip read in a darkened room for example when the main lights are turned off for a power point.
* Ensure that the pupil is watching you when you begin to speak, and try to give visual clues if you are changing to a new topic.
* Check that the pupil has understood, but be aware that the pupil **may say ’yes’ even if they have not been able to follow.**
* When a pupil is focussed on a task it may take them longer to stop and give their full attention.
* Try to reduce the general level of background noise in the classroom as the hearing aid will amplify all sounds.
* Be aware that background noise can make it difficult to focus on the speaker.
* Pupils with a hearing impairment can be easily distracted by background sounds and movements.
* Be aware that taking notes while listening can be challenging especially when the pupil is skilled at lip reading.
* It can be helpful for the pupil to have a paper copy of PowerPoints etc and a glossary of key vocabulary.
* Group work can be difficult if:
* The other pupils’ speech is not clear or not familiar to the pupil with the hearing impairment.
* The pupils talk to each other quickly - the pupil with a hearing impairment may struggle to watch as they take turns in talking. They may also change the subject quickly adding to the difficulty in speech reading.
* Raised levels of background noise from other groups
* It is helpful to write key information, vocabulary etc on the board. Numbers can be quite difficult to distinguish – for example fifty and fifteen, as they sound similar and look almost the same when speech reading. There can be confusion with page numbers, dates etc for homework.
* Be aware that audio tapes and video sound quality may not be as good as a ‘live’ speaker!
* Subtitles may be helpful when viewing TV etc (be aware that YouTube videos can be quite inaccurate)
* There may be difficulty in hearing contributions from other pupils, so try to summarise what has been said. Paraphrasing generally can be helpful to understanding.
* Be aware that the pupil may have problems outside the classroom. Hearing impaired children at the back of assembly halls are unlikely to follow announcements and notices.
* The pupil may have difficulties chatting to friends in a busy noisy environment such as a dinner hall and therefore feel isolated or left out of social situations.
* The pupil may have difficulty hearing warning sounds such as hissing gas or cracking glass.
* Sound travels less well outdoors, so PE and games teachers, or teachers accompanying the pupil on an outing, should take this into account and check that he has understood all instructions and/or information. Windy weather can make it harder to hear.
* Colds and/or allergies can reduce hearing.
* The pupil may benefit from sitting next to a supportive friend.
* The pupil may become more tired towards the end of the day than his/her peers due to having to concentrate to understand.

(secondary – please see separate document about assessment arrangements)

**Unilateral loss considerations**:

* Headphones – be careful that the signal is not split. Check that the full signal goes to both ears.
* Be aware that hearing sounds or speech in the ear with a normal level of hearing coming from the side with the deafness is harder because the head naturally blocks some sound from that side (this is called the 'shadow effect')
* identifying the source of sound, the direction a sound is coming from or judging the distance the sound is coming from can be challenging – particularly relevant in PE and school outings eg crossing the road.
* understanding speech can be more difficult when there is background noise.
* Pupil could choose his/ her seat

**Guidelines for the use of Radio Aid (‘fm’, ‘Roger’)**

Some pupils have been issued with a radio aid in addition to their hearing aids. This means that the voice of the person who uses the transmitter becomes dominant to the background noise. It can make it easier for the pupil to focus on the transmitted voice and helps them to maintain concentration. The signal remains the same wherever the wearer stands which means that the pupil hears the signal consistently as if 1 metre away. The pupil still needs to see faces clearly to add meaning to what he is hearing.

Be mindful that some older pupils can be embarrassed when attention is drawn to the radio aid.

The transmitting microphone needs regular charging which can be done at school or at home.

**Please remember:**

* Wear the transmitting microphone approximately 15-20cms from the mouth.
* It is important to mute the microphone when the pupil is not expected to listen to or when speaking to a different group of children to avoid distraction. Remember to switch on the transmitter before speaking.
* The pupil still needs to see the teacher clearly and gaining the pupil’s attention before beginning to speak remains important. The pupil will continue to benefit from sitting close to the front in order to see/listen carefully. Some pupils benefit from watching lip patterns and facial expressions to add meaning to what they hear.
* Carrying items close to the transmitter, clothes/jewellery, tapping the transmitter can be distracting for the pupil.
* The transmitter can be passed to different children during discussions or used within group work.
* The transmitter may be able to connect to other devices such as a phone, to help with listening

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