

Supporting social and emotional development

8

Feeling included and that they are a valued member of the group can improve a pupil's self-esteem, confidence and emotional well-being. However, the communication difficulties associated with deafness can affect how a pupil is able to integrate socially because:

- it is difficult to talk in groups, partly because of deafness but also because of the attitudes of other pupils
- many opportunities to socialise take place in the noisiest parts of the school where deaf pupils are more likely to mishear
- some pupils are bullied because of their deafness
- social acceptance requires an understanding of social norms but hearing pupils acquire these by incidental learning experiences, which deaf pupils are less likely to have. Deaf pupils may need specific teaching to understand situations from other people's perspective
- deaf pupils may worry that they will not be able to understand what is being said to them or that people might misunderstand them. They may become over-dependent on support from adults and lose confidence when support is not there.

Good practice in supporting social and emotional development

“The school as a whole is very deaf aware, with the other children learning to sign, so interaction is good. One good thing the school does is the Christmas play. The children conduct the play and/or songs in sign, which is fantastic. The children do not feel excluded from the school as a whole. We are really pleased with things so far.”

– Parent

“I think people should be more aware of deafness but accept that it can be hard to understand if you have not had experience of it.”

– Pupil

“I don't really care about being deaf because I can't change it and I like it that I am deaf, [it] makes me different to people.”

– Pupil

Deaf awareness training for other pupils is helpful, enabling other children in the class to understand the difficulties that deaf pupils face and what they can do to help and make them feel included. With younger children this can be done by modelling helpful behaviours, while older deaf children can be encouraged to assist in the 'awareness' of their peers.

When facilitating communication between the deaf pupil and their classmates, it is important to maintain the appropriate balance between providing support and ensuring the pupil does not become over-dependent on the teaching assistant for social support.

The teaching assistant can support the pupil to develop strategies for initiating and maintaining social interaction such as the importance of turn-taking, eye contact and not interrupting. All pupils in the class may benefit from reminders about helpful group behaviours.

A deaf pupil's confidence can be boosted by praise at appropriate times, particularly when they contribute to group activities and when they have made their own friendships.

Deaf children need the same opportunities as other children to join in extracurricular activities. After-school clubs for pupils run by external organisations should meet the pupil's communication needs and make reasonable adjustments to ensure full participation. Deaf children may need encouragement to join in the activities and seek reassurances about the support they will receive.

It is important for deaf children to have a positive self-image. This will help them to deal with situations when feedback from staff may not be positive. School staff can help pupils develop a positive self-image as they develop awareness of their deafness by:

- letting deaf pupils know that other children can also make mistakes, mishear or misunderstand and require time out. Deaf pupils may find it supportive to know they have similar experiences to their peers and that they are not the only one in class needing support
- teaching pupils strategies that will help them cope with the unpredictable world outside school, particularly in relation to their deafness. For example, it is very useful for them to be able to identify why a conversation is becoming difficult and what they can do themselves to improve the situation
- ensuring that visual aids, stories and other resources reflect the diversity of people in the community which includes deaf children
- providing opportunities to meet other deaf children – parents or local deaf groups may be able to help provide these opportunities.

If the pupil is still unhappy despite being given the above support, the Teacher of the Deaf should be consulted. Any concerns should always be shared with the parents of the deaf pupil.

Anti-bullying policy

Deaf pupils are more vulnerable to bullying than hearing pupils. The University of Cambridge comprehensive literature review in *Responding to Bullying among Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities* found that:

Children with SEN [special educational needs] and/or disabilities have many characteristics that may make them more vulnerable to bullying. However, social skills, language and communication emerge as key issues in much of the bullying that affects pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. Social behaviours are crucially important with regard to peer victimisation since the ability to understand social behaviour and to communicate effectively in social situations are central to social engagement. Language and communication are key elements in the development of social competence, so even subtle shifts in children's responses within the peer group can make them vulnerable to ostracism and teasing.

Schools face a number of challenges in identifying, responding to and preventing pupils with SEN and/or disabilities being bullied and victimised.

Staff can help prevent and deal with bullying by:

- giving the pupil time to give a full account of what happened, recognising that communication can be particularly difficult when they are upset
- ensuring the pupil and their parents know the school's anti-bullying policy and understand related procedures
- ensuring the pupil understands the concept and different types of bullying – that all pupils tease and are teased, but unacceptable levels should be challenged and personal toleration levels should be respected
- identifying a staff member for the deaf pupil to discuss worries and concerns with
- regularly observing and monitoring the interaction between pupils and being alert to signs of bullying, such as a pupil:
 - asking to stay inside at break time
 - becoming anxious near lunch and home time
 - not taking part in class activities
- providing opportunities or individual sessions for the pupil to decide and practise (for example, through role play) how to respond to bullying and how to problem solve
- providing deaf awareness training for pupils and, when appropriate, involving the deaf pupil in choosing the content.

Bullying and Deaf Children: A guide for primary and secondary schools (2014)

Our resource has been produced for mainstream teachers, SENCOs, Teachers of the Deaf, teaching assistants, communication support workers and any other education professionals working to support deaf pupils in primary and secondary schools. It provides guidance on how schools can adapt existing arrangements to prevent bullying and for handling bullying incidents in order to meet the needs of deaf pupils. Many of the suggested actions set out in this resource will benefit all pupils in your school. Resources for parents and young people are also available at www.ndcs.org.uk/bullying.

Behaviour and discipline

In theory, there should be no difference between discipline approaches used with deaf pupils and hearing pupils. However, the Equality Act 2010 requires schools to take reasonable steps to avoid treating disabled pupils less favourably because of their disability. It is important to remember that deaf pupils can mishear or misunderstand instructions, which can be a reason for not doing what they're told.

Schools should strike a balance between making reasonable allowances for a pupil's deafness and communication difficulties, while holding deaf pupils to the same behaviour standards as other pupils.

Schools can support good behaviour by ensuring:

- instructions about timing and expectations in all areas of school are clear and reinforced
- the pupil has understood any timetable changes
- the pupil knows the rules and the consequences of breaking them
- staff members are aware that the cause of any indiscipline could be frustrations about not being able to hear/understand what is going on, fatigue (deaf pupils can have a shorter attention span and tire more quickly as they have to concentrate hard to hear) or being teased or bullied about their deafness
- the pupil understands why they are being disciplined – deaf pupils' understanding of emotions and other people's mental states may be less developed than their peers', so it is important that they understand the reason for discipline and not just that they got caught.

An effective school will:

- promote the social and emotional development of the deaf pupil
- encourage deaf pupils to be independent, feel positive about their deafness and identify what support they require
- organise peer awareness training to help other pupils understand the needs of the deaf pupil
- ensure that their anti-bullying policy considers the specific needs of deaf pupils and take steps to prevent bullying.