

Inclusion Works

Children with a Sensory Impairment

Many children attending local mainstream schools have hearing or visual difficulties. The needs of children with mild difficulties may be met through different aids and small changes to teaching style and classroom organisation. Children with severe or profound impairments may need an intensive package of specialist advice and support from the services for Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired Children. These Services give training to school staff and help them develop skills in meeting the needs of these children and work closely with other people supporting the child.

Children with a hearing impairment

The Service for Hearing Impaired Children covers a wide range of hearing difficulty, from mild and fluctuating through to profound deafness. Staff from the service will make an assessment of each child's individual needs before giving advice to school staff.

Advice to school staff may include:

- Making sure the child isn't isolated from other children in the class
- Signs which could show a child is having difficulty in hearing
- The effects of having a hearing impairment on a child's learning
- The importance of 'listening' and 'watching' for children with hearing impairments
- Ways to reduce background noise or ensure the child can see the person speaking for lip reading etc.
- Providing specialist equipment and advice on the use and maintenance of audiological equipment
- Ways to help a child whose language skills have been affected by having a hearing impairment

The Service for Hearing Impaired Children is able to give 'talks' to classes about hearing impairment and 'Deaf awareness', if this is felt to be appropriate.

The service is available to all schools in Rotherham and offers a range of services depending on the needs of the child. Specialist teaching support is available from a qualified and experienced teacher of the hearing impaired, also Non-teaching support from a specialist Child Support Assistant.

Hannah's Story

At three year old, Hannah was diagnosed with a moderate/severe hearing loss, was fitted with hearing aids and referred to the Service for Hearing Impaired Children.

She had two home visits a week from a teacher of the hearing impaired, who worked with the family to help develop her listening skills and language. She had started to develop some lip reading and with the added benefit of hearing aids start to copy words. The teacher of the hearing impaired also taught her and the family some sign language, which enabled her to express herself with less frustration. Her Speech and Language therapist regularly monitored her progress.

Before starting at her local nursery, the teacher of the hearing impaired gave training and advice to the staff. By four years old she had made good progress in her language, was

able to follow simple instructions and made less use of sign language. A teacher of the hearing impaired saw her twice a week, once at home and once in the nursery.

When she started school the Service for Hearing Impaired Children gave Hannah a radio aid which connected to her hearing aid. This aid (a transmitter worn by the teacher and a receiver worn by the child) reduced the problem of background noise and distance between Hannah and her teacher. As Hannah's hearing loss was more severe in the high frequencies, she found it difficult to hear particular speech sounds like 'f', 's' and 'sh'. Advice was given to school about how this might affect her literacy skills; the Service provided 7½ hours per week from a specialist Child Support Assistant to help with this.

Hannah is now in Year 4. She is a social little girl who enjoys playing with other children. She manages the use of her hearing aids and radio aid. The school has been able to get grants to improve the acoustic conditions of Hannah's classroom and fitted carpets and blinds. Hannah's language has continued to develop well. She still has some gaps in her vocabulary, and new words have to be introduced and explained carefully. Writing, particularly spelling, continues to cause difficulties, so the CSA support is still in place. The teacher of the hearing impaired visits weekly.

The school, service and parents work in partnership, and meet regularly to review progress.

Children with a visual impairment

The Service for Visually Impaired Children covers a wide range of difficulty; many simple eye defects can be remedied by glasses and may not require input from the Service.

Support from the Service is flexible and based on the child's need. It could range from checking up on the child once a year to one or two sessions per week of specialist teaching.

Staff from the service will make an initial visit when a visual difficulty is suspected or has been diagnosed. An assessment of each child's individual needs will be made before giving advice to school staff.

Advice to school staff may include:

- Making sure the child isn't isolated from other children in the class
- Signs which could show a child has a visual impairment or that their vision is deteriorating
- Explaining the individual child's visual loss and its impact on their learning
- Ways to make best use of the child's vision, use of lighting etc
- Use of multi-sensory resources - children with a visual difficulty rely on hearing more
- Ways to help the child to move around the classroom safely
- Raising awareness of situations the child may find especially difficult
- Providing specialist equipment and teaching skills such as touch typing
- Teaching social skills which other children may have picked up by watching others

The service is available to all schools in Rotherham and offers a range of services depending on the needs of the child. Specialist teaching support is available from a qualified and experienced teacher of the visually impaired, also Non-teaching support from a specialist Child Support Assistant. The Service also has a specially qualified mobility

support worker who can work on individual programmes aimed at developing independence.

The service can make large print, tactile or Braille versions of text books, reading books, worksheets etc. Toys and books can be loaned to parents, schools or support staff to encourage the child's independent learning.

Rianna's Story

Rianna is a 5 year old girl who has been blind since birth. She goes to her local mainstream school in Rotherham and has specialist support from the Service for Visually Impaired Children. She was first referred to the service when she was 4 months old.

Rianna's family, school and teacher from the Service for Visually Impaired Children all worked together to get Rianna ready to start school. The teacher from the Service for Visually Impaired Children visited once a week and helped Rianna with the skills she would need for learning Braille. Her family worked with the specialist teacher to develop her independent mobility and life skills.

All school staff had training on the implications of having a blind child in school. Rianna visited the school several times without the other children there so she could become familiar with the school building.

Rianna has successfully completed foundation 2. A lot of pre-planning is needed to make sure Rianna can take a full part in all activities. The class teacher has to do this planning early so the V.I. support team can make Braille books, worksheets or labels for displays and can gather equipment for school to borrow. Often real objects or tactile resources are used in a multi-sensory approach which helps many children in their learning, not just a child with a visual impairment. While other children do handwriting Rianna may work out of the classroom for 1 to 1 teaching of Braille.

Rianna's learning goals are similar to those for every other child in the group; it is just the way of achieving them that is different. She also has some extra areas of work such as mobility and orientation. The school are proud of her inclusion – many visitors would find it hard to single Rianna out from the group. The school, service and parents respect each other's roles in the supporting Rianna and meet regularly to discuss and review this.

Where can I get more information?

A more detailed version of this 'Inclusion Works' has been given to school; the Special Educational Needs Coordinator at your child's school can give you a copy.

You can contact the Service for Hearing Impaired Children on Tel: 01709 336603 and the Service for Visually Impaired Service on Tel: 01709 336606

Information about what is available inside and outside school to support a child with a sensory impairment is available from the Parent Partnership Service by ringing Tel: 01709 823627 or downloading it from the website www.rotherhamparentpartnership.com