

Berkshire Sensory Consortium

Service Summer 2024

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Welcome to Summer Edition of our Newsletter



1 - Jane Peters, Head of Service

Welcome to the Summer 2024 edition of the BSCS newsletter which will be our final one of this academic year. It's hard to believe that we are fast approaching the end of term and I think both the staff and the children and young people are ready for a break.

In this edition as well as our regular stories and celebration of what our young people have been doing we have also focused on some of the 'specialist 'Technology' which some of our pupils use.

The summer term is always busy with supporting young people through their public exams, preparing for transition as young people start school, move between primary and secondary and of course preparing for adulthood as we say bon voyage to those finishing to go on to university, college, apprenticeships and work. As a Service we are proud of the good outcomes our young people achieve not just academically but socially and through the development of their independence and life skills. For those

leaving the service keep in touch and let us know how you are doing. Come back and share your experiences with other young people.

This term we said goodbye to Lisa Burton, specialist Teaching Assistant with the VI team and have welcomed Chi who has replaced her. Sadly we are also losing Suzy Ralphs from the VI Team who has been with the Service over 30 years. Happy retirement Suzy.

If you haven't already done so, please do fill in our annual 23/24 surveys which have been sent out to you -we really do value your feedback and your views are important to us.

In September we are hoping to launch our new website - same address, don't forget all of our events are advertised there via our Facebook page and through our emails to you so do check in regularly to keep up to date with what is happening within the service. Remember to let us know if you have changed any of your contact details.

Thanks again to Hannah for editing the newsletter and to everyone who has contributed, especially our young people and partners. Happy reading and have a great summer and hopefully some sunshine.

With best wishes

Jane.

National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) Feedback

On behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) I would like to express our heart felt gratitude to the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service (BSCS) for hosting us back in March. During the visit, we had the pleasure of meeting the families of the Chatty Monkeys Preschool Group, engaging with the BSCS provision, and connecting with the RBH Audiology Department over lunch, and exploring the Emmbrook Infant and Junior Primary Total Communication Resource in the afternoon. What truly stood out was the seamless coordination among the services. Every professional we spoke with was making a conscious effort to ensure families did not fall through the gaps. This was reflected in the stories the families told us of the incredible support they had received. The BSCS team also displayed keen awareness of the ever-evolving challenges faced by deaf young people and their families. It was clear that their effective communication and organisation allowed them to proactively address emerging challenges, ensuring they didn't become a trend. We were also impressed with BSCS's efforts to find, train, and retain talent from within the communities they support. It was obvious that this was more than just a job for those we met, and as a result they were genuinely passionate about improving the lives of deaf children and their families. We both left Berkshire inspired by your dedication, and fuelled with your exciting ideas, questions, and invaluable insights.

To BSCS and Jane Peters: Thank you for all your hard work and perseverance, you are making such a positive difference to the lives of the deaf children and their families you support.

Our Stories - Achievements

Eleanor's fundraiser for The National Deaf Children's Society

On 19 May 2024, I ran the Binfield 10K Road Race to raise funds for the National Deaf Children's Society. I was diagnosed with moderate to severe hearing loss in both ears when I was a baby, and have lived with hearing aids all my life. Being the only deaf person in my family and school it was hard for my family to understand and get the support they needed when at the time deafness was an uncommon disability. NDCS have given me and my family a lot of help over those years, including helping with technology and support through tough times. Although I'm not a runner myself I thought I should do something to give back and say a huge thank you as I wouldn't be where I am now without them. My dad and brother will be took art as well! Eleanor



2 - Eleanor and her Dad on race day

Amazing Me - a poem written by Jannat

Amazing Me

My brain flows like the River Thames,
My legs run like a ferocious tiger,
No one can stop me, I'm unstoppable,
No one can put me down, I will never give up,
I will always be strong, inside and out,
No one can bully me,
Because I will always stand up for myself,
And I will never look back,
The past is in the past,
We make friends in the end,
So never give up, you will always succeed,
So just listen to me and you will see,
You will always succeed.

Jannat age 10

Anastasia's Journey

We are thrilled to highlight Anastasia, one of our remarkable pupils. Anastasia's journey from Romania to the UK two years ago has been marked by incredible resilience and adaptation. Despite significant vision impairment, she has not only

excelled academically, mastering a new curriculum, but has also achieved her Bikeability Level 1 & 2 certificates, learning to ride a bike independently.

"Life has shown me that I must persevere, going over every obstacle and focusing on my potential," Anastasia shares. "See the capability, not the disability!"

Anastasia's story is a testament to her courage and determination, inspiring everyone around her. Her achievements remind us of the power of perseverance and the ability to thrive in the face of challenges.

Let's celebrate Anastasia's journey of growth and success!



3 - Anastasia and her mum wearing helmets ready to cycle



4 - Anastasia ready to get on her bike.

BSCS Competition

As part of Deaf Awareness week (6th - 12th May 2024) we set up a poster competition - to design a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Congratulations to the winners below.

Winner of the Hearing Aid Poster Competition

My Football by Barney (aged 8 1/2)

I love football. It's fun when you get used to it. It helps your hearing because they speak loudly so you can hear and it helps you understand.

I play for a team named Ascot United. The season that has finished we won all our matches apart from one game. The players got friends quickly. It's great to play for a team. I love football and playing for Ascot as a striker and I am very, very good.

I won the hearing aid competition. My hearing aid was decorated in the Ascot United colours.



5 - Winner holding up his hearing aid design poster.



6 - Barney playing football for Ascot United

Winner of the Cochlear Implant Poster – Charlotte Jupp

I chose the Harry Potter theme because I am inspired by the way Hermione empowers through everything. Scarlet and gold are the Gryffindor colours. I drew the logo of Gryffindor on the headpiece. On the processor I drew Hermione

and her wand.



7 - Competition winner with her Cochlear Implant design poster

Curiosity and Creativity – Social Event with The Creation Station



On Saturday 23rd March we held a social event for children on The Berkshire Sensory Consortium caseload for children in Years 1-3 with a hearing loss or vision impairment.

This was an opportunity for our pupils to meet others who have a sensory impairment while having fun sparking curiosity and inspiring creativity in a slime making workshop and an art workshop using foam clay.

The Creation Station ran the art activities supported by Berkshire Sensory Consortium staff. It was lovely that parents joined in and had time to meet other parents, sharing ideas and promoting wellbeing for our children.

The Creation Station staff commented:

So lovely to meet you and Vanessa today and the lovely children and parents. The kids were brilliant and it was such a joy to see them come out of themselves and make friends and enjoy their creativity.

Comments from parents:

- Lovely to meet with other children and parents.
- It was nice the event was age specific so easier to leave the children to it.
- She was interested to see other children.
- I had great conversations with other parents.
- Lovely relaxed event. Appreciated the opportunity to step away and leave the children to it!
- Was great to talk to other parents about some of the challenges.
- Lovely session. Great activities. Very well organized.
- Well organised.
- A lovely mix of structure and autonomy for the children to let their creativity and independence shine - so important for children with a disability.
- Ava really enjoyed both activities. Balance of adult support was good.

- The activities were very enjoyable and fun to do.
- The children thoroughly enjoyed the event and all the feedback showed that 'I liked it lots. For a lot of the children these were new sensory experiences for them and they really enjoyed meeting the other children and making friends.



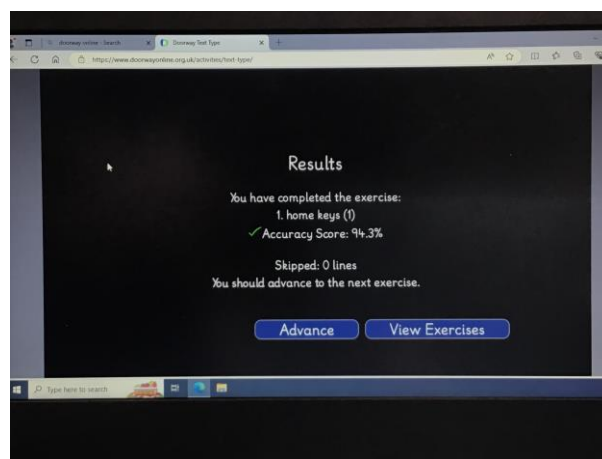
Spotlight - Technology

Easa's Touch Typing Success

Since January, Easa Nadim has been learning to touch type using an online touch typing programme (doorwayonline). Since then, Easa's confidence has grown hugely and he is now gaining accuracy scores of 94% and above. He says his aim is to reach 100%! Well done Easa, we are extremely proud of you!



8 - Easa sits in front of a laptop, practising his touch typing.



9 - The screen on a laptop shows that Easa has completed the exercise '1. Home Keys' and his current accuracy score is 94.3%

Technology for pupils with visual impairment update

Technology continues to advance at pace in the Vision Impairment (VI) world. This year our technology focus has been on mastering screen reader technology. Our long term goal is that all our VI pupils leave the service with the technology skills needed to access employment or further education. As Technology evolves, our curriculum for staff and students must develop.

For many years our go-to solution for Secondary age brailleists has been the single braille line notetaker, the BrailleNote Touch+. Multi-line braille technology is now poised to hit the marketplace and we are carefully watching to see which products will provide optimal access for our learners going forward.

Monarch dynamic tactile technology

In the meantime, we have been developing access to coding for brailleists, from first principles to full access to GCSE lessons with Python via the use of a screen reader and braille display.

For those who use large print, advances in apps and features on tablets and laptops mean digital access is ever better. This year the service has purchased several pieces of hardware to enable CYP to 'try before buy' preparing them for access to their education or to make Disabled Students Allowance applications.

If you would like further information on what your child is using or family training on ways to support them, please feel free to contact your QTVI. They will always be very happy to help.



10 - Example of Monarch Dynamic Tactile Technology

Equipment for pupils who are deaf, or have a hearing difficulty

Hearing aids and cochlear implants are essential pieces of listening equipment as they enable children who are deaf, or have a hearing difficulty, to hear the sounds of speech more clearly.

However, these devices (known as *personal amplification*) are *near-field* listening devices and the optimum listening distance from the speaker is regarded as no more than 2 metres.

Have a look at some of the personal amplification devices that are used by children and young people in Berkshire



11 - Picture of Phonak hearing aid



12 - Picture of Nucleus 8 cochlear implant



13 - Picture of Bone anchored hearing aid - BAHA 6

In a busy classroom where there can be lots of background noise it can sometimes be challenging to hear the teacher clearly. To help with this difficulty an ‘Assistive Listening Device’ can be added into the child’s listening package.

There are many different options for enhanced *far-field* listening. But the idea is the same- to take the teacher’s voice and transmit it directly into the child’s personal amplification.

Have a look at some of the Assistive Listening Devices we use in Berkshire. These include radio aids and proprietary microphones, using digital transmissions and Bluetooth technology.

Even David Walliams thinks that radio aids are a good idea!

If you feel that your child would benefit from using a remote microphone in their educational setting please discuss with your Teacher of the Deaf.



14 - David Walliams wearing a Roger Touchscreen radio aid



15 - Picture of the 'Mini Mic' - an assistive listening device



16 - Picture of Partner Mic device



17 - Picture of Roger On radio aid device



18 - Picture of Roger Touchscreen radio aid

Aashna - Samsung Accessibility Trial



19 - A Samsung S24 Ultra phone

Aashna was one of the lucky few to be accepted on to a trial Samsung Accessibility programme. The aim is to make mobile phones more accessible for people with a vision impairment. Aashna has just completed her first year at university and access to a good quality phone with good accessibility functions has gone a long way to creating a successful first year. Aashna is passionate about wanting to make a difference and being

part of this trial is allowing her to do this, paving the way to making others with vision impairments life a little bit simpler.

I have Stargardt Disease which means I am registered blind. I'm so happy to share that I'm involved in the Samsung Supporters Accessibility phone testing programme where they gave S24 Ultra phones out to people with visual impairments. This phone has been a massive help to me and I've loved using it and trying out all the accessibility features! The launch event happened at Samsung KX in London where they provided us with the phone and a short interview on your experiences with accessibility on your device so far.

The phone has been a really great help. I've found the zoom feature on the camera especially helpful as it allows me to zoom into signs when travelling much more than other phones and still keeps the images very high quality. I'm getting to learn more about the accessibility features and changing the colour display of the phone and font size to my liking.

The Samsung team is really committed to continually improving their accessibility features so that their phones can be used by everyone. They're always available to respond to any questions I have about using the phone. I'm planning to provide regular feedback on my experiences using this phone.'

Transition Events

Transition to Adulthood Online Webinar - June 2024

Once again we were able to offer our Year 12 pupils an opportunity to listen to the advice of Callum Russell from CrystalEyes about moving on from school or college. Whether that be to university, work, an apprenticeship or an exciting mini-gap or gap year, he was able to signpost support and resources helpful to

young people with hearing loss or vision impairment. Callum also highlighted the importance of work experience as a means of both developing the skills that employers look for, as well as actively demonstrating the qualities of a valued and competent employee rather than a person with a disability.

Experience shows that many of our young people with hearing loss or vision impairment often have such successful work experience placements that they go on to secure a permanent post within the company. After all, they have already had to develop so many workplace skills like determination, resilience, problem solving and the ability to communicate and advocate for themselves.

The webinar is designed to be both informative and to prepare both parents and students for the next step, but also to open a discussion between them about alternatives. Callum, as a young person with vision impairment, embarked on a solo gap year expedition to South America after school without support or a guide. He survived to tell the tale, and now is a great advocate for encouraging naturally nervous parents to readily support their children to seek out their own experiences.

Some verbal feedback from parents attending webinar:

- They felt reassured that they knew how to apply for the equipment and support students had relied on in school
- they had found the webinar helpful and thought provoking,
- they appreciated the opportunity to ask someone who has recently been through this transition about some of the practicalities and recommendations

We will run this webinar again at a similar time next year for Year 12s. Parents who attended this year would recommend it.

20 - CrystalEyes Logo

Dinton Activity Centre Year 6 Transition Day

On Tuesday 9th July eight children supported by Teachers of the Deaf from the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service met at Dinton Activity Centre, Wokingham for the annual transition to secondary school event.

The students had never met each other and were a very diverse group of young people. Despite this they worked together brilliantly to complete a range of challenges that involved effective communication and team work. These activities ranged from releasing themselves from intertwined 'foot cuffs', turning tarpaulins whilst standing on them and racing to touch numbers in ascending order in the fastest time to building shelters in the woods that would keep them dry in a downpour.

Following a much needed lunch break the afternoon session focused on building confidence in communication skills and discussing some of the unique challenges that they may face at secondary school as young people who are deaf or have a hearing loss.



Figure 21 Year 6 children taking part in a game



Figure 22 A shelter that was made in the woods

VI Transition Event for Year 6 pupils

BSCS ran their yearly Year 6 Transition Picnic for pupils with Vision Impairment at Wokingham Waterside Centre. The pupils had an opportunity to discuss their transition to secondary school in a fun and interactive way creating positivity jars and bags. They also went Katakana boating which was great fun and we were really lucky with the amazing weather.



23 - Julie Bunker and Lizzie Scales who ran the event



24 - A pupil's positivity jar and bag

Pre-School Groups

Chatty Monkeys - West



25 - Jody, Teacher of the Deaf (QToD), reading the 'Hungry Caterpillar' story with the BSL interpreter alongside.



26 - Parents and children watching Jody, QToD reading the 'Hungry Caterpillar' story.



27 - Child using playdough cutters.



28 - Child making a playdough caterpillar

Throughout the summer term Chatty Monkeys have had the focus of the Story of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle.

Each week we have read through the story, children that have radio aids are all connected to listen to the speaker, and we have spoken and signed the story.

The children have become familiar with the different foods that have been eaten and we have used ambitious language around the lifecycle of a butterfly introducing words, such as cocoon and symmetry.

The children have tried and made some of the different foods that are showcased throughout the story and seemed to really enjoy them. We have tried to link some of the activities in the free play to our story with children playing with edible soil and creepy crawlies which was great fun.

Throughout the term we have been visited by Sam McMahon from Berkshire Deaf Children's society, Eleanor Grandchamp who is a Speech and language therapy student and one of our own Teachers of the Deaf has been completing her competency to do ear mould impressions on the under fives under the supervision of Mary from audiology at The Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Here is a link to a video of Jane Peters, QToD and Head of Service reading the story of The Hungry Caterpillar at Chatty Monkeys. Watch this with your children:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16h7oGjiEI-DXWeranOdXxPo4nhYz4oCg/view?usp=drive_link

If you do not have a Google account watch this video on our Facebook page, or go to our website: [Newsletters | Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service](#)

Here is a link to a BSL signed video of 'The Hungry Caterpillar':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Rvss6oC9do>

Busy Bees



29 - Tim, our Teacher for the Multisensory Impaired, exploring different materials with the children.



30 - Child making the bees

Busy Bees: Nurturing Growth through Play

At Busy Bees, we focus on nurturing key skills through fun and engaging activities. This summer term, we've made significant strides in our children's development.

To celebrate International Bees Day, our little ones crafted happy bees using their handprints, boosting their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and creativity. Our scented playdough session was a hit, enhancing fine motor skills and sensory awareness through shaping and smelling the playdough. Joyful singing sessions, complete with instruments and imaginative props, improved auditory skills, rhythm, and imaginative play.

Creativity thrived during our Father's Day card-making activities, fostering fine motor skills and artistic expression. The sensory room and soft play area offered excellent opportunities for developing gross motor skills and sensory exploration.

National Writing Day saw children enjoying mark making with flour, oats, and paint, enhancing tactile skills and creativity.

A heartfelt thank you to all our Busy Bees and their parents for making each session special. We look forward to our next adventure, continuing to support our children's early development with more engaging activities.



31 - 2 children playing with the musical instruments



32 - 2 children playing with the sensory toys



33 - Child playing with the lights



34 - Child playing with the playdough

Chatty Monkeys East



35 - Parents and children having snack time at the Chatty Monkeys group.

This term we have looked at the rhymes 'Wheels on the bus' and 'Teddy Bear's Picnic'. Singing familiar rhymes is a fun way to support language development. We made paper plate bear masks and painted pictures.

We have been making collage pictures and craft sparklers. As well as having members of the audiology team attending our sessions to take ear impressions if you need them.

The Chatty Monkeys East have enjoyed the lovely venue this year using Thames Valley Adventure Playground. From September we are moving to the new venue of the Children's Centre at Romsey Close. Our first session is Tuesday 17th September. We hope to see you there.

Wishing you all a happy Summer holiday!



36 - Children and parents at snack time.



37 - Sam playing with a car at Chatty Monkeys



38 - Sam playing with toys at Chatty Monkeys.

All Aboard - Bus experience session 30/5/24

Children and young people (CYP) with vision impairment had a great bus experience session at Reading Bus Depot. They explored double decker, single decker and open top buses. They also had the opportunity to go through a bus wash and had a private drive around Reading town. Some CYP also had the opportunity to sit in the driver's seat. We had 16 pupils from Y7 up to Further Education. This was a joint event with Berkshire Vision and Guide Dogs.



39 - Pupils on the bus sitting in the driver's seat and exploring the ticket machine.



40 - Pupil standing on top of the open top bus.



41 - Pupils looking at the buses in the depot.

Voluntary Work with Children with a Vision Impairment in Sierra Leone

During some of my school holidays, I've had the privilege of working with the Milton Margai School for the Blind in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The primary goal of my volunteer efforts is to equip teachers with the skills and resources needed to effectively teach mathematics to visually impaired children, who have historically had limited exposure to the subject.

Together, we've developed teaching resource packs containing buttons, bead strings, Braille number lines, magnetic Braille numbers and 100 squares, all aimed at using a tangible approach to teaching basic mathematical concepts. Additionally, through fundraising efforts, I've provided Cubarithms, a Perkins braille, and magnetic boards.

With the support of the head teacher, I've been training three dedicated teachers by modelling lessons and co-teaching sessions. Together, we're modifying the existing Sierra Leonean mathematics lesson plans to include adapted resources and methodologies.

Though our progress may be gradual, there's a notable shift taking place. Teachers and students are becoming more engaged and even starting to find enjoyment in a subject that was once met with dread.

Jean Weiss (QTVI)



42 - Class 4 learning how to use the Cubarithms



43 - Class 4 learning how to use the Cubarithms.



44 - Class 3 learning about place value with tens bundles.



45 - Class 6 pupils learning about fractions with Brian.



46 - Class 1 pupils sitting around the table learning the 'Five Little ducks' song.

Spotlight - Speech and Language Therapy Service

Speech sound development- hearing is key, but what else do we need to know? by Louise Dix, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist



In the last edition of the SCS magazine we wrote about the Communication Tree-speech sounds really are the blossom on the communication tree when many other root and branch skills have developed first (eg listening, turn taking, understanding of language). Families are often aware of which sounds might be tricky for a Deaf child, but may not always know when to expect the sound to emerge. A list of the order of speech sound development can be found on the Berkshire Healthcare CYPIT webpage (search Typical Speech Sound Development) but in this piece, we hope to explore some common examples and questions about speech sounds, and factors other than hearing that impact on development.

Example 1- When counting up Early words- ‘should I include the words that only we understand as well as the clear words?’

SLT Comments- yes absolutely, first/early words do include everything that you as main carers can understand in context. First words will usually not be clear- at whatever age/stage that they come, for both hearing and Deaf children. Telling other people what words to expect your child to use will help more people to reinforce them.

Example 2- My child is 2 years old, I know her Deafness might make it harder to hear the /s/ and /f/ sounds, and I am worried that she is not using them yet.

SLT Comments- yes /s/ can be difficult for some deaf children, but not all of them. It can be helpful to understand that we expect /s/ and /f/ to be emerging by around 3 years of age (for hearing children as well), and even then it will not be in all places and in all words correctly. Having fun with sound play eg making a snake sound linked to story book snakes will help to highlight the sound.

Example 3- We went on holiday to Gran Canaria, and my child just cannot say that word clearly

SLT Comments- Children need to hear words many times clearly, before they can start to make their best attempts (in an age appropriate way). A new name/placename/technical vocabulary can be difficult (even if motivating!). Clap or tap the beats to new or tricky words eg Gran Ca-nar-i-a (5 beats) to help split it up into manageable chunks.

Example 4- My child misses the first sound from lots of words, I think it is to do with his hearing, he is 4 years old.

SLT Comments- it will be helpful for us to know what type of words he misses the first sound off of- if it is words that have 2 consonants at the start eg snow, then they say 'no', star is 'tar', this is typical for hearing children at 4 years old as well, it is a developmental stage. If the missing consonant is at the beginning of short every day words like ball, dog, cup- this is less typical both for Deaf and hearing children, and we would need to do an assessment to plan their next steps.

The key things that will have a positive impact on speech sounds for Deaf children are:

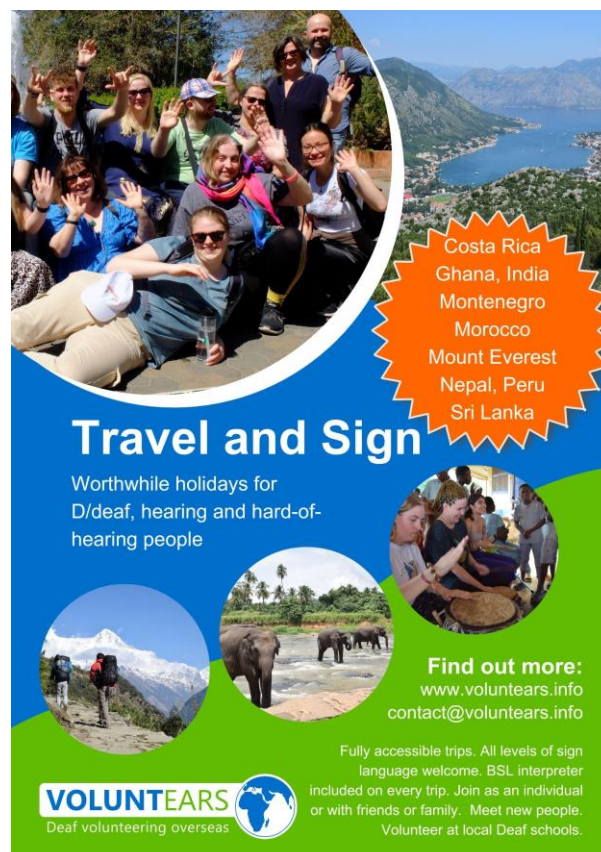
- Building up consistent use of hearing aids.
- Give up dummy use when possible- dummies can impact on teeth and speech.
- Repeating sounds and words back to children- without expecting them to always copy back.

For further information please look at Berkshire Healthcare's CYPIT website, and consider attending our free new parent/carer workshop on Helping Children with Unclear Speech - Go to [Children's speech and language therapy workshops \(berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk\)](http://Children's speech and language therapy workshops (berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk))

VoluntEars Charity



Some of the BSCS team recently met with VoluntEars. The charity arrange trips to Costa Rica, Peru, India, Montenegro, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ghana and Morocco. All trips are designed to be fully inclusive for D/deaf, hard-of-hearing and hearing people. Enjoy travelling to exciting destinations with the support of friendly VoluntEars staff and a BSL interpreter on every trip. Help at local deaf school and visit all the must-see sights! Open to all ages. Join as an individual, or with family or friends. Contact VoluntEars for more information: www.voluntears.info Email: contact@voluntears.info SMS/Whatsapp: +447713752124



Travel and Sign

Worthwhile holidays for
D/deaf, hearing and hard-of-
hearing people

Costa Rica
Ghana, India
Montenegro
Morocco
Mount Everest
Nepal, Peru
Sri Lanka

Find out more:
www.voluntears.info
contact@voluntears.info

Fully accessible trips. All levels of sign
language welcome. BSL interpreter
included on every trip. Join as an individual
or with friends or family. Meet new people.
Volunteer at local Deaf schools.

VOLUNTEARS
Deaf volunteering overseas

47 - Poster explaining about VoluntEars charity

Happy retirement!



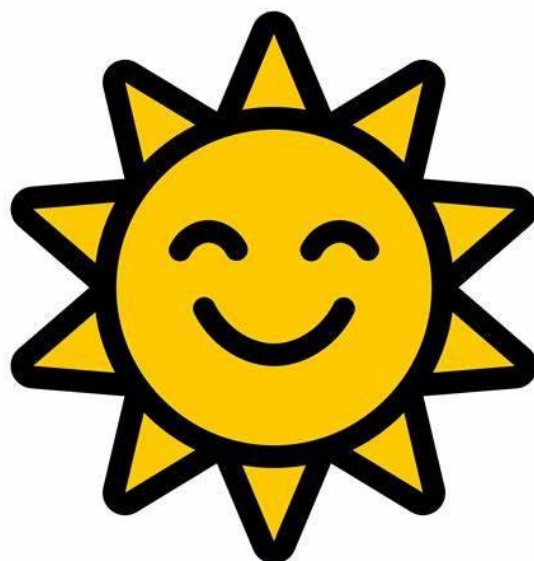
48 - Suzy Ralphs

Qualified Teacher of Vision Impaired, Suzy Ralphs, is currently the longest serving teacher for children with a vision impairment on our team and she is retiring this summer after nearly 30 years working for the service. She has seen many changes over the years. She lived through the breaking up of Berkshire into the 6 unitary local authorities which heralded the birth of the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service in 1998.

She has also witnessed the move towards the inclusion of blind pupils in mainstream schools as standard which represents one of the biggest changes to the nature of the job of a peripatetic teacher for children with a vision impairment.

Suzy has embraced all of the changes over the years and developed her skills to match the new demands as they emerged. She will be sorely missed by pupils, families and staff but we nevertheless wish her an active and fulfilling retirement.

Wishing you all a fantastic Summer Holiday!



49 - Berkshire Sensory Consortium Team

The Six Authorities





w: www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk

f: www.facebook.com/berksscs
