

Down Syndrome and Hearing Loss

What does this mean?

- Some children/young people (CYPs) with Down Syndrome also have a hearing loss. This may be sensori neural (permanent) but is more often conductive due to 'glue ear'
- One or both ears may be affected and can fluctuate according to time of year or general health of the child.
- Glue ear is caused by congestion in the middle ear.
- Fluid in the middle ear should drain away via the Eustachian tube to the back of the throat
- CYPs with Down Syndrome may have more horizontal (flat) tubes making draining difficult
- CYPs may grow out of 'glue ear' as tubes become longer, wider and more vertical
- CYPs may be issued with behind the ear hearing aids or a BAHA on a hard or soft band
- Children are also sometimes fitted with grommets.

Challenges for learning

The CYP may:

- Have poor auditory memory and auditory processing skills.
- Mishear specific speech sounds rather than not hear.
- Have delayed speech and language development linked to hearing difficulties and other learning difficulties.
- Be sensitive to noise and to other sensory stimuli.



Ways to help

- Reduce background noise and provide quiet learning opportunities alongside class learning.
- Differentiated tasks in class to support inclusion at the child's own level.
- Consider sign to support understanding.
- Benefit from visual prompts such as word banks and signs to support listening in class or in small groups.
- Using fingerspelling or cued articulation can support learning of speech sounds.
- Use of a daily visual timetable to support understanding of expected activities.
- Use word banks and picture banks to support the visual learning skills which are often a strength.
- Play listening games to develop one, two, three word understanding (see "Black Sheep" resources).
- Listening Lotto games to strengthen listening skills.
- Whole word learning instead of a phonics-only approach to literacy.
- Use of *See and Learn* materials to support vocabulary development. See Resources below.
- "Sensory Workout" / "Sensory Diet" as part of daily activities to support sensory integration.
- Include differentiated fine motor skill activities within the child's day to support pencil control and writing stamina.

Other resources

www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk
www.ndcs.org.uk
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

Related Sheets

- Glue ear
- Hearing Loss
- Hearing Aids
- Bone Anchored (BAHA) or Bone Conducting Hearing Aids