Differentiating for Hearing Impaired Pupils

Pupils with a hearing impairment may or may not have delayed language. If their language levels are significantly below what would normally be expected for their chronological age, they will need differentiated teaching materials in addition to the modifications of your normal teaching style such as:

- Clear, natural spoken language delivered at a normal rate
- Clear messages
- Visual support
- Repetition/recapping of key points
- Consistent use of amplification (e.g. hearing aids) and residual hearing
- Differentiation of the level of questioning you direct at the pupil with hearing impairment

Differentiation of lesson content

- Differentiate the language used on worksheets or in written materials supporting class discussion/learning. Make sure that the written language presented is accessible, but also stretches and challenges.
- Consider the objectives of the lesson: it is common for pupils with a hearing impairment to understand concepts and facts but be unable to demonstrate this because the language used to frame follow up questions is too complex.
- Reduce the amount of new and/or technical vocabulary introduced in a lesson if it is not essential to meet the learning objectives.
- Reduce the amount of information or number of concepts where possible.

- If the lesson cannot be modified to meet the needs of the pupil, arrange for pre- or post- tutoring to be provided.
- Remember the more you collaborate with the Teaching Assistant (TA) or Communication Support Worker (CSW) supporting a pupil with a hearing impairment, the more they can help by preparing additional teaching/learning materials to support your teaching.

Modifying text

- All materials presented in a written form should be differentiated to take account of a pupil's language level
- Think about the purpose of the teaching materials you are using. Is the key point to get some facts or concepts over or is the language being used itself the 'content' of what has to be learned? Where appropriate, make sure the language used on worksheets does not get in the way of the pupil understanding the key concept or learning objective for the session.
- Most pupils with a hearing impairment will benefit from a clear list of key words and concepts covered in the lesson and used in written follow up materials. Some will be helped by written follow up materials which are specifically designed to reinforce and test understanding of a reduced range of vocabulary or content.
- Some pupils will benefit from follow up materials which allow them to express their understanding in a more visual/pictorial way than would be appropriate for other children.

Preparing worksheets

- Think before you start about what technical or specific language is essential
- Adjust the carrier language for content so that it is appropriate to the level of the subject matter and age/ability of the pupil
- Reduce the complexity of the text
- Use clear headings which give a good idea of the subject matter which follows
- Consider the font size, spacing on the page and general layout
- Use clearly labelled diagrams and pictures if they are available
- Use short sentences
- Present information sequentially
- Write statements first, then ask questions

- Avoid words with double meanings – or provide opportunities for these to be explored
- Ensure that passive sentence constructions are understood, e.g. "The radio was invented by Marconi" would be "Marconi invented the radio" as an active sentence.

Recommended strategies to use in the classroom

- Check that the pupil is wearing his/her hearing aids and he/she sits near to you. Hearing aids will not pick up sounds clearly at distances more than 2 metres.
- Encourage them to sit close to and face the teacher but also where he/she can see as many pupils as possible.
- Make sure that you have the pupil's attention before you start talking.
- Speak clearly, naturally and at a normal rate.
- Face the pupil when you talk to him/her: keep a distance of 1-2 metres for lip-reading purposes.
- Encourage them to turn round to see the faces of pupils who are contributing to discussions. You could do this by naming the pupil who is about to contribute.
- Check the pupil understands; don't presume he/she has a certain general knowledge.
- If in doubt, ask the pupil to reiterate what you have said, rather than tell him/her repeatedly. Never assume that a nod means he/she has understood.
- Allow them time to respond and to take part in the lesson. Give him/her lots of encouragement.
- Ensure good light on your face, but don't stand in front of the window with the light behind you as you become a silhouette!
- Don't talk to the class while writing on the whiteboard as lip-reading and gestures become limited.