

# **How to Support Children with Hearing Impairment**

Education Bureau 2015

## **Introduction**

Parents always wish to provide their children with the best living and learning environment in order to nurture them to achieve success in future. With early identification and support, children with special educational needs (SEN) may adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potentials.

## **What is Hearing Impairment (HI)?**

A disorder in any part of the auditory system will affect the hearing ability, and thus affect the speech and communication abilities. A child with hearing thresholds higher than 25dB can be regarded as having HI. HI can be classified into 5 degrees:

### **Mild Hearing Impairment**

**(Hearing thresholds: 26 to 40 dB)**

- Have difficulty in perceiving faint sound or a conversation in a noisy environment;
- A suitable distance from the sound source and a good listening environment can increase the ability to perceive sounds; and
- May have minor problems in articulation.

### **Moderate Hearing Impairment**

**(Hearing thresholds: 41 to 55 dB)**

- Unable to completely perceive a conversation held at normal voice level;
- The ability to communicate can be enhanced with the use of hearing aids; and
- May have problems in articulation.

### **Moderately Severe Hearing Impairment**

**(Hearing thresholds: 56 to 70 dB)**

- Can hear people talk only within a short distance;
- With hearing aids and speechreading, the effectiveness of communicating with others can be enhanced, but still have difficulty in understanding audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles; and
- Speech development is hindered to a larger extent, articulation is poor.

### **Severe Hearing Impairment**

**(Hearing thresholds: 71 to 90 dB)**

- Can hear loud sounds only within a short distance;
- Have to rely on hearing aids and speechreading to communicate with others, have difficulty in understanding audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles; and
- Speech development is greatly hindered.

## **Profound Hearing Impairment**

### **(Hearing thresholds: 91 dB or higher)**

- Usually find it very difficult to hear sounds and can sense the vibrations only, have to rely on hearing aids or cochlear implants to perceive sounds;
- Also rely on speechreading, other visual cues such as gestures and body language are helpful for comprehension of conversational speech, but unable to understand audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles; and
- Speech development is immensely hindered.

## **Roles of Parents**

### **I Suspect that My Child may have HI...**

- Take your child to the doctor for an audiological assessment as soon as possible. When necessary, schools and doctors will refer students with persistent HI to the Speech and Hearing Services Section of the Education Bureau (EDB) for further assessment and follow-up.

### **My Child is Assessed to have HI...**

- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively;
- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning and hearing ability in school; and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary;
- Encourage your child to use hearing aids on a regular basis, and practise with him/her the hearing and speech training techniques taught by rehabilitation organisations;
- Speak in front of your child as far as possible to allow him/her to see your lip movements, facial expressions and gestures. Speak clearly and naturally. Be sure not to raise your voice deliberately, speak too slowly, or exaggerate oral movements excessively. If you need to get his/her attention, tap on his/her shoulder or use other gestures to signal;
- Help your child understand a conversation by explaining abstract terms and rephrasing/simplifying complicated sentences. You can also use gestures as cues or write down key words to make yourself clear;
- Encourage your child to participate in extra- curricular activities and let him/her receive appropriate training, so as to enhance his/her self- esteem and improve his/her social skills;

- Help your child form good reading habits and develop effective learning skills and strategies so that his/her language abilities can be strengthened gradually; and
- Work in partnership with teachers or other professionals to help your child improve the speech and communication abilities.

For further information on supporting children with SEN, parents may refer to the “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” on EDB website (please see the back page for the website).

## **Support Services and Strategies**

In general, EDB will, subject to the assessment and recommendations of the specialists and with parents’ consent, refer students with severe or profound HI to schools for children with HI to receive intensive support services. Other students with HI may attend ordinary schools. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of the students:

### **Ordinary School**

- Adopt effective teaching methods and materials such as using visual strategies, as well as formulating appropriate support measures, to provide systematic support and regular review on the progress for students with HI;
- Arrange good listening environments, including the setting up of quiet teaching environments, providing preferential seating, etc.;
- Provide FM system to students with HI, if necessary, so as to facilitate them to receive speech signals of teachers effectively; and
- Use training materials, resource packages, information leaflets, etc. to help students with HI make use of their residual hearing in learning so as to enhance their social skills, communication and learning effectiveness to overcome the barriers arising from HI.

### **Special School**

Schools for children with HI would provide primary one to secondary six education services for students with severe or profound HI, so as to help them overcome their HI and develop their potentials. Taking into account of students’ abilities, as well as their learning and communication needs, the schools would adopt the most appropriate communication modes in teaching and learning (including oral, sign and total communication). Teachers would also train the students to use their residual hearing for listening to oral language in order to help them master the skills in communicating with other hearing impaired or hearing people.

### **Additional Support**

#### **➤ Audiological services**

EDB arranges regular audiological review and related audiological services for students with HI, including the provision of hearing aid, earmould and related repair and maintenance services.

- **“Enhanced Support Service for Hearing Impaired Students Attending Ordinary Schools” (ESS)**
- If students with HI studying in ordinary schools still have persistent learning and communication problems after receiving school-based support, resource teachers from the schools for children with HI would provide them with ESS;
  - Resource teachers would provide after-school support to students with HI so as to help them equip learning strategies, enhance their literacy skills and improve their speech, language and communication skills; and
  - Resource teachers would pay school visits to the home schools of the students with HI to share their experience and teaching strategies with the teachers so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of students and facilitate them to integrate into school life.

## **Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry**

### **Education Bureau**

<http://www.edb.gov.hk>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office (Tel: 2863 4646)

Kowloon Regional Education Office (Tel: 3698 4108)

New Territories East Regional Education Office (Tel: 2639 4876)

New Territories West Regional Education Office (Tel: 2437 7272)

General Enquiries on Special Education (Tel: 3698 3957)

### **Speech and Hearing Services Section**

- Speech Therapy Services (Tel: 3698 3790)
- Audiological Services (Tel: 3698 3909)

**Special Education Resource Centre** (Tel: 3698 3900)

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/index.html>

### **Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education**

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/download/ieparentguide.pdf>

### **Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education**

[http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/support/wsa/ie%20guide\\_en.pdf](http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/support/wsa/ie%20guide_en.pdf)

## **Department of Health**

- Child Assessment Service (Tel: 2246 6659)  
<http://www.dhcas.gov.hk/eindex.html>
- Student Health Service (Tel: 2349 4212)  
<http://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

## **Social Welfare Department**

<http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index>

## **The Hong Kong Council of Social Service**

<http://hkcss.org.hk/e>

## **OneClick**

<http://oneclick.hku.hk/en>