

How to Support Children with Hearing Impairment

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

What is Hearing Impairment (HI)?

A disorder in any part of the auditory system will affect the hearing ability and thus affecting 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 HI (Hearing Thresholds: 26 to 40 dB)

- Have difficulty in perceiving faint sound or a conversation in a noisy environment
- Close to sound source and a quiet listening environment can increase the ability to perceive sounds
- May have minor problems in articulation

Moderate HI (Hearing Thresholds: 41 to 55 dB)

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

Moderately Severe HI (Hearing Thresholds: 56 to 70 dB)

- Can perceive people talk only within a short distance
- With hearing aids and speechreading, effectiveness of communication can be enhanced, but still have difficulty in understanding audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles
- Speech development is hindered to a large extent and articulation is poor

Severe HI (Hearing Thresholds: 71 to 90 dB)

- Can perceive loud sounds only within a short distance
- Have to rely on hearing aids and speechreading in communication and have obstacles in understanding audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles
- Speech development is greatly hindered

Profound HI (Hearing Thresholds: 91 dB or Higher)

- Usually find it very difficult in sound perception as only vibration can be sensed; have to rely on hearing aids or cochlear implants to perceive sounds
- Rely on speechreading; other visual cues such as gestures and body language are helpful in comprehension of conversations, but find it difficult to understand audiotapes or audio-visual information without subtitles
- Speech development is immensely hindered

Roles of Parents

I suspect that my child may have HI...

- Seek medical consultation as soon as possible. When necessary, the professional concerned will refer students with persistent HI to the Educational Audiology Service Section of the Education Bureau (EDB) for school-based support and relevant follow-up

My child is assessed to have HI...

- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively, including the transfer of Audiological Report to the school so that the school can arrange appropriate support services
- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand the conditions of your child's learning; and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary
- Encourage your child to form the habit of using hearing devices consistently
- Practise with him/her the skills acquired in rehabilitative training, e.g. auditory and speech training techniques
- 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 or 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 extracurricular activities and let him/her receive appropriate training so as to enhance his/her self-esteem and improve his/her social skills
- Encourage your child to form a good reading habit and help them grasp effective learning skills and strategies so that his/her language abilities can be strengthened gradually
- Work in partnership with teachers or other professionals to provide support

Support Services and Strategies

In general, the EDB will, subject to the assessment and recommendations of the professionals and with parents' consent, refer students with more severe impairment in hearing 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:

Special School

Schools for children with HI would provide primary one to secondary six education services for their students so as to help them overcome their HI and develop their potential. 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 the people with HI or normal hearing.

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
- Provide good listening environments, including the setting up of quiet teaching environments, providing preferential seating, etc.
- Provide Wireless Transmission System (WTS) to students with HI if necessary so as to facilitate them to receive speech signals of teachers effectively
- Use training materials, resource packages, 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

Additional Support

➤ Hearing aid fitting and related services

For students with HI in need of hearing aids, the EDB arranges free hearing aid fitting and related services including the provision of hearing aids, earmoulds and related follow-up services such as adjustment and repair, etc.

➤ “Enhanced Support Service (ESS) for Students with Hearing Impairment”

- The EDB has commissioned a school for children with HI to provide additional support on a need basis to students with HI in public sector ordinary schools and special schools
- If students with HI who use hearing devices still have adaptation, learning or communication problems after receiving school-based support, the EDB will, subject to parents’ consent and assessment of the EDB, arrange the students to receive the service
- The service content includes: strengthening the speech, language, communication and social skills of the students with HI; sharing the experience about teaching students with HI with the school teachers and equipping parents with the required knowledge, skills and strategies to enable them to support their children with HI more effectively

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

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

Hong Kong Regional Education Office	2863 4646
Kowloon Regional Education Office	3698 4108
New Territories East Regional Education Office	2639 4876
New Territories West Regional Education Office	2437 7272
General Enquiries on Special Education	3698 3957
Educational Audiology Service Section	3698 3909

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with HI

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/hearing-impairment/index.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- Operation Guide on the “Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>