



QUICK GUIDE

to supporting Students
with hearing loss



Deaf & Hard of Hearing
FOUNDATION

Small changes can make a big difference

In this guide, we explore some of the changes you can make as a teacher to support hard of hearing students in the school environment. Often it is the small changes that can make the biggest difference.

According to the World Health Organization, one in five young people currently live with a disabling hearing loss. And, a further one billion young people are at risk of permanent hearing loss around the world.

In New Zealand, the increasing number of abnormal hearing results that are being picked up through our Hearing Screening Programme in secondary schools shows that our national rates may be mirroring these global trends.

The reality behind these figures is sobering. Hearing loss can have significant impacts on a student's educational outcomes, as well as on their mental health and social wellbeing.

With an increasing number of students now experiencing some degree of hearing loss, supporting hard of hearing students in the school environment must be a priority for schools and teachers.

The National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing works hard to raise awareness in schools. Our goal is to provide support and promote more inclusive environments where hard of hearing students can thrive and reach their full potential.

This is a quick guide for teachers who want to make changes in the school environment that supports the learning of students who are hard of hearing.



As someone who has been through secondary school with a hearing loss, I know how tough it can be. Just a few changes in the classroom to the way lessons are taught can make a big difference for kids who are struggling to hear.



Natasha Gallardo
Chief Executive

How hearing loss can impact learning in a classroom

Even a mild hearing loss can significantly impact a student's ability to follow a lesson and actively participate in class. It may take intense concentration to comprehend information and understand instructions. Many hard of hearing students report being exhausted at the end of the school day.

Below, you'll find an overview of the degrees of hearing loss and how they impact an individual's ability to hear. Please note, no experience of hearing loss is the same. It is important to check in with a student to find out more about their individual needs.



**Even with hearing aids or a cochlear implant a student with hearing loss will still experience the below.*

DEGREES OF HEARING LOSS	
Mild	A student will hear most conversations and may be able to fill in gaps. They may experience disruption to grammatical markers and the articulation of some spoken sounds, such as consonants. They may have some difficulty listening when there is background noise.
Moderate	A student will hear some speech sounds and words spoken at normal voice levels from a distance of one meter – once you have gained their attention. Listening in environments with background noise will be challenging.
Severe	A student will hear some aspects of speech and may be able to fill in gaps if they can lipread. This degree of hearing loss will significantly impact the development of spoken language.
Profound	A student may hear occasional loud noises but will not hear speech sounds, even if a person is standing close. Profound hearing loss will significantly impact the development of spoken language. Many will use New Zealand Sign Language as a primary way to communicate.



Make sure your lessons are visual

- Provide a good range of visual learning materials such as handouts, YouTube clips with captioning, posters and diagrams
- Give visual cues when you are about to change the subject
- Write keywords up on the board to help provide context
- Use simple and familiar words to link unusual or unknown words
- Some students will need to lipread you. Speak clearly, but don't shout or exaggerate your speech. This can distort lip patterns, making it harder for students to understand you
- Be aware it is impossible to lipread and take notes at the same time
- Also, not all students with hearing loss are good lipreaders. Check-in with the student to see if they are comfortable lipreading
- Set the pace of your communication to suit students who are hard of hearing. Seek feedback to find out what works for them.

Ensure your students can see you

- Face students when you are talking so they can see your lips, hands and gestures. These are all valuable communication cues that help fill in any words not heard
- Be mindful that hard of hearing students may not be able to understand you if your back is to them
- Try not to move around while you are speaking
- Avoid standing in front of windows or backlighting that cast your face into shadow
- Find out the optimal space you need to keep between you and a hard of hearing student to be heard. For example, for students with moderate to severe hearing loss this might be around one metre. Try to organise the space to support this.



Manage background noise

- Try to keep noise levels low during a lesson. A quiet space is an ideal listening environment
- Avoid instructing students while they are doing noisy, distracting activities such as getting their things out or being given material, as listening is more difficult with background noise
- During group discussions, ask students to speak one at a time
- When noise is unavoidable, be sure to write essential instructions up on the board or provide a handout.

Raise awareness

Help students with hearing loss to develop a positive sense of self, as well as a sense of belonging and cultural identity.

- Encourage students to learn about the experiences of being hard of hearing and to see it in a positive light
- Encourage students to learn New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). Regular use of basic NZSL among students will help to build up the cultural identity and sense of belonging in students who are hard of hearing
- Identify what a student is good at, for example, leadership and/or NZSL skills and use it as the basis of a group activity the student can lead or contribute to
- Integrate topics that cover famous Deaf and hard of hearing people (Beethoven, Thomas Edison, Helen Keller) in the social sciences curriculum
- Celebrate NZSL week. Find out more: www.nzslweek.org.nz



Set up a buddy system

- Setup a buddy system where classmates can take turns letting the student know what is happening, what page they're on and any class instructions the student needs to be aware of
- If you need to gain the student's attention, ask the buddy to tap them on the shoulder before speaking
- Encourage the buddy to explain what others in the class are saying during group discussions and at any other times where it may be challenging to follow conversations.



Learn about technology that helps

Some students who are hard of hearing will use technology such as hearing aids, cochlear implants and FM systems to improve their ability to hear.

- Find out how well students can hear using assistive equipment
- Learn the basics of the technology, such as the FM system, learn how to use it, maintain it and troubleshoot problems if they arise
- Have the class familiarise themselves with using an FM system
- When using an FM system ensure only one person is speaking at a time
- Ask students to provide a visual cue, such as a hand gesture to indicate when they are about to speak (and need to use the FM system)
- Check with the student that the technology is on and working.

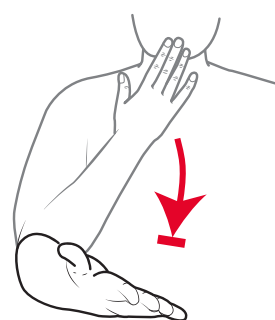


Provide more time and check in

- Check the student is ready to listen to you. Allow a moment for the student to focus (remember that listening requires extra concentration)
- Allow time for students who are hard of hearing to process any questions and assimilate information before answering
- Check students understand what is happening by asking: ‘What do you have to do now?’ instead of asking: ‘Do you understand?’ This can lead to them responding with a nod regardless of whether or not they understand
- Check in to find out how to best arrange classroom seating to ensure hard of hearing students can see you and their peers. For example, many find it helpful to sit in a horseshoe arrangement so they can see everyone’s faces.

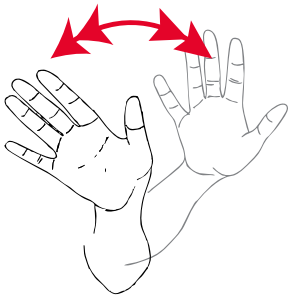
Other things to be aware of

- You may need to organise an interpreter or communicator for students who rely on sign language
- Be aware that some students with hearing loss may need counselling or other support.

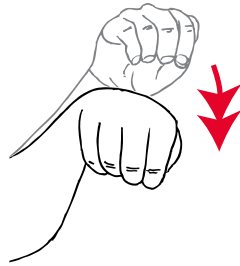


Thank you

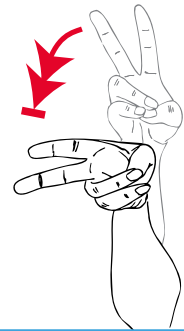
**Source: Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. A resource for educators. Ministry of Education 2016.*



No



Yes



Again

How can we help?

If you would like to request more information or resources on teaching hard of hearing students, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We'd love to help.

Email: enquiries@nfdhh.org.nz

Phone: +64 9 307 2922 or

Free call 0800 867 446

Website: www.nfdhh.org.nz

Check out more handy school resources:
www.nfdhh.org.nz/school-programmes



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