**EA Sensory Service**  

# The Role of the Classroom Assistant

Effective working with classroom assistants (CA) should:

* raise the achievement of deaf pupils;
* enable the inclusion of deaf pupils in school activities;
* encourage independent learning.

By working with a child’s teacher and Teacher of the Deaf (TOD), the CA can make an important contribution in supporting deaf pupils to overcome barriers that can impede the pupil’s development:

* Educational progress - deaf learners do not have the same access to information; incidental learning experiences (particularly those which are linguistically based) are limited; everyday conversation and communication is not as easily accessible as that of their hearing peers.
* Language and communication skills including literacy - despite early identification of a hearing loss, deaf children may enter school with delayed communication and language skills, which impacts on the successful acquisition of literacy skills. Some still have underdeveloped language skills during secondary school with lower levels of literacy than hearing pupils of the same age and similar ability.
* Social inclusion and interaction – as this becomes more linguistically based and the pace of conversation increases, deaf pupils can become more isolated.
* Self-esteem - for example, one pupil with a hearing loss described himself as “… always seeming behind and never catching up. It makes me feel everyone else is cleverer than me; they must be too; I am in all the bottom groups.”

Hearing aids and other audiological technology enable the pupil to access sound more effectively but they do not replicate normal hearing or restore it. The pupil is still at significant risk of not being able to access the detail of what is being said to them without support. In particular, deaf children will need support for extending and developing age appropriate language skills.

CAs play a vital role helping the teacher ensure that deaf pupils access learning and participate in the life of the school. They help to minimise the barriers to accessing the curriculum and support the inclusion and achievement of deaf pupils.

The CA’s support should take into account the impact of hearing loss on learning.

## Priorities for CA support

* To assist in developing the communicative, language and listening development of the pupil so that any gap between the pupil’s current level of development and that of their peers is reduced.
* To ensure the pupil is able to access the lesson and achieve the objectives set for him or her.
* To ensure the pupil is socially included and has similar opportunities to be involved and to contribute to lessons and the school community as other pupils.
* To promote independence.
* To promote social interaction eg. in the playground/canteen.
* To foster peer group acceptance - do not get in the way.
* To develop and monitor listening skills.
* To explain unfamiliar vocabulary.
* To keep child on task (but move away to allow child to work independently)

CA support aims to enable achievement and independence rather than learned helplessness. This means CAs will not simply support the content of lessons but may also:

* devise materials that enable the pupil understand a concept better or
* spend more time discussing an idea with a pupil so that the next steps/targets in their language and communicative development are enhanced.

CAs may also be given responsibility for:

* The technological equipment- ensuring that the pupil’s technology and equipment is working and is being used as agreed with the pupil’s teachers and Teacher of the Deaf. This might include the checking of personal hearing aids and notification of faults, checking of radio aid systems and their use in classrooms, ensuring DVD and video materials are used with subtitles wherever possible, with transcripts being available if appropriate, ensuring audio equipment is connected to radio aid systems and encouraging the deaf pupil to work towards managing his/her own equipment
* Implementing learning programmes set by the teacher- carrying out a specific programme designed to promote a language or literacy or study skill that will enhance the pupils’ more general access to the curriculum.
* Pre-tutoring or post-tutoringthe pupil in individual withdrawal sessions or small groups, to enable the pupil to access curriculum more independently and to ensure that key concepts are understood and their associated language reinforced.
* Adapting learning resources and teaching materialso that they are accessible and more understandable to the pupil.

## ‘Rules of thumb’ for CA’s

* Give the pupil access to as much of the lesson as possible.
* Encourage the pupil to be as independent as possible.
* Ensure that the pupil can gain some success but allow them to learn by their mistakes.
* Ensure that the pupil learns new skills or improves upon those already learnt.
* Foster co-operative working and facilitate the development of friendships.

## Guidance for Class or Subject Teachers

When working with CAs it is good practice for the class or subject teachers to:

* Provide CAs with copies of schemes of work and lesson plans in advance.
* Give CAs copies of any texts, books or resources that will be used in advance.
* Set aside time to meet with the CA to plan and discuss lessons.
* Explain the role they want the CA to take during different parts of the lesson.
* Remember that over time the CA is likely to have developed considerable knowledge of the deaf child. Therefore consult the CA about meeting the deaf pupil’s needs and involve them in assessment and target setting.
* Keep the CA informed of the pupil’s progress.
* Develop a relationship with the deaf pupil, remember they are the teacher and avoid relying on the CA to be the only person teaching the deaf child.

## CA practice to be avoided

* The CA taking responsibility for a task away from the pupil.
* Prioritising the end product of a task rather than understanding.
* Reactive and unplanned intervention.
* CA explanations that are sometimes inaccurate or confusing.
* CAs frequently supplying pupils with answers.
* Teachers delegating responsibility for teaching to the CA.

## Clarity of roles

The CA is part of a wider team supporting the pupil’s learning and wellbeing and it is important to be clear about respective roles of staff.

The CA’s support is focused on improving the skills and access of the pupil such that they become increasingly independent as a learner. The CA may be involved in some direct teaching under the guidance of the Teacher of the Deaf, class or subject teacher.

The class or subject teacher is responsible for the overall teaching and learning of the pupil. This includes planning the CA’s role in lessons and ensuring lesson plans are clear about outcomes. The class or subject teachers, in liaison with the SENCO, CA and Teacher of the Deaf will:

* agree when and if the pupil might be withdrawn from a lesson for one to one or small group support including the objectives for such withdrawal;
* agree whether pre-lesson or post-lesson tutoring is required;
* be involved in the evaluation of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the support provided to the pupil, monitoring progress towards targets and outcomes.

The Teacher of the Deaf will be able to provide support and training to the CA and teaching staff and to advise on all areas of the pupil’s development. In terms of supporting the work of the CA, the Teacher of the Deaf can:

* advise on the use and maintenance of hearing equipment;
* undertake specialist assessments to inform the setting of learning objectives and provision of appropriate support strategies;
* advise on how deaf pupils can access all learning activities;
* support planning;
* advise on the outcomes that may reasonably be expected for deaf pupils when support is sustained and developed effectively over time;
* offer training and coaching.

**“…good inclusive practice is about building a bridge between the child and the curriculum, not about intensive one to one interventions” (Lorenz 1998)**

**Source**: Raising the Achievement of pupils with hearing impairment: Effective working with teaching assistants in schools. National Sensory Impairment Partnership. 2012

For further advice please contact the Sensory Service via phone: 028 25 661 258 or email: sensoryservice@eani.org.uk