

### Modern foreign languages – Advice taken from the National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS)

Many deaf pupils can successfully learn foreign languages. They must have full access to the curriculum and, while for some there may be potential difficulties, adjustments should be made in lessons to enable them to learn a modern foreign language (MFL).

Guidelines for MFL teachers should always include use of available hearing technologies, communication and classroom management strategies.

**Some pupils may have difficulty with pronunciation because they cannot hear the sound clearly enough. It is then difficult to relate the sounds of the language to its written form.**

Pupils may need:

- ‘Semi-phonetic’ transcriptions of the language to present pronunciation in an accessible way. It may help to group words with consistent pronunciation together (for example, pain, sain; sans, dans; mere, pere). The most common MFLs taught in school have a better phoneme/ grapheme correspondence than English so once pronunciation is grasped it will be the same in all cases. Once the pupil is comfortable with pronunciation, they can concentrate on learning correct spellings.
- Teachers and teaching assistants to work together so teaching assistants are familiar with pronunciation. If there are specific language assistants it can be useful for them to model vocabulary pronunciation on DVD for teaching assistants to use in class and the pupil to take home.
- Extra opportunities to practise pronunciation during lessons or in pre- and post-tutoring sessions.
- Additional practice or pre-tutoring to grasp letters that do not sound the same as in English, for example, the ‘h’ sound does not exist in French – words like hôtel, homme, haché are all pronounced without the ‘h’. This can be confusing for pupils who lipread, as the lip patterns will be different from what they expect.

**Deaf pupils may experience difficulties in understanding new vocabulary (particularly pupils with ‘low-level’ English language skills).**

Pupils may need:

- Visual aids and vocabulary support sheets.
- A check that they know the equivalent English vocabulary.
- Role play, gestures and facial expressions to understand meanings.
- One-to-one teaching assistant support in pre-tutored sessions to reinforce meaning.

**MFL teaching often involves using audio material or ‘aural’ learning.**

Pupils may need:

- Their radio aid and additional leads to provide direct access to audiovisual systems for listening exercises; language labs may provide better quality sound

- Audio material to be used less often, with live speaker versions of material provided, for example, a film of a staff member speaking the material. If this is not possible, the teacher, language assistant or teaching assistant should provide lipreadable repetition. If there is more than one voice, this should be shown by visual clues, for example, name cards or different hats for different speakers.
- To have an opportunity to hear audio materials or read a transcript before their classmates.

**Some deaf pupils will be disadvantaged in aural assessments and require access arrangements for examinations. A live speaker version of the audio content should be provided. This must be applied for via the school's examination office within the examination board's timescale, with the advice of the Teacher of the Deaf. 'Access arrangement for examinations' on page 93 contains more information.**

Watch online: A short video clip on supporting achievement in MFL is available online by going to [www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement). There are several video clips related to subjects – please scroll down for the MFL one!