Practical strategies

To be considered for students with Usher syndrome

There are lots of practical strategies which can be used to help make sure that a child or young person (CYP) with Usher syndrome can access all the information and opportunities in school.

> *"I prefer it when teachers ask 'How can I make this work for you?' rather than just assuming that they know what I need."*
>
> *18 year old*

Delivering content

- [ ] As general rule, always give verbal description **as well as** visual content (e.g. verbally describe the diagram or demonstration you are showing the class, or write key vocabulary in clear font on the board as well as saying it out loud).
- [ ] Always show **captions on all videos** (in class, assemblies etc.)
- [ ] Stand still and face the front when speaking to class.
- [ ] Do not stand in front of window or brightly-lit whiteboard or screen when speaking to the student or class (creates a shadow on face which limits lipreading)
- [ ] Where possible, give CYP **own copy of resources** (in suitable format – to be determined at start of each term with specification included on one-page profile) at start of lesson without them having to copy (copying increases fatigue and reduces their capacity to process other auditory or visual information at same time).
- [ ] Where possible, designate group work in a quieter area of classroom so that CYP can access the group discussion
- [ ] Where relevant provide key **vocabulary list** and key concepts diagram [see example – link to be added] to reduce the need to take notes and enable student to concentrate on content
- [ ] Consider reducing workload (but ensure no reduction in challenge: e.g. give option of completing every other question in a maths activity rather than the first 5, to allow CYP to access the same increasing range of challenge as their peers)
- [ ] Use CYP's name / other learner's names as often as possible, to help CYP know where to direct their attention
- [ ] Train peers to **put their hands up and wait** until it is their turn before speaking
- [ ] **Repeat question** (e.g. from another student) before answering
- [ ] Check for understanding before adding more information
- [ ] Reading lists to be given in advance (depending on age of CYP, shared with parents)
- [ ] If CYP uses Assistive Listening Device (e.g. FM system), make sure you are confident of how this works (at start of term) and use as recommended for all lessons, group and 1:1 work (pass microphone to peers)
- [ ] If technology batteries run low / flat, CYP needs permission to go to designated battery charging space to collect new batteries (for hearing aids / implant processors).
- [ ] Permission to leave class 5 mins early to allow extra time to get to next class whilst avoiding crowded corridors, and get in lunch queue/PE changing rooms early to avoid trip hazards
- [ ] Permission (or key) to use the lift when moving between floors to allow the child to avoid using stairs if difficult to navigate, especially during busy periods
- [ ] Phonics – consider access to sound / speech sounds. Reduce background noise when phonics work is being undertaken, and always offer visual reinforcement (i.e. show the word written as well as saying out loud)
- [ ] Use support strategies for literacy development (e.g. shapecoding)

How to set up classroom

- [ ] Maintain quiet classroom with minimal background noise (e.g. switch off fans, AC units, projectors when not in use)
- [ ] CYP to show which seating position works best for them (likely to be different in different classrooms / spaces – e.g. taking into account lighting, glare, access to sound etc.)
- [ ] CYP to sit away from distractions (if they use hearing aids or cochlear implants these will 'tune' to nearest sound – e.g. the child next to them who is tapping on the table or noisily fidgeting)
- [ ] Remove all clutter and trip hazards within classroom
- [ ] Equipment position to remain the same in classroom and peers to be taught to return items e.g. scissors always kept in same place
- [ ] No use of Van der Graaf machine (or any other static or magnet related experiment which could impact CYP's cochlear implants)
- [ ] Bear in mind, CYP may need time to adapt to lighting when entering classroom from outside or going from classroom to outside area where it may be brighter. Give a warning if you are going to switch off or on lights or move to a dark or light space.

Key: **CYP** = Child or young person

Practical strategies

To be considered for students with Usher syndrome

There are lots of practical strategies which can be used to help make sure that a child or young person (CYP) with Usher syndrome can access all the information and opportunities in school.

> ***"We don't expect teachers to be experts in Usher syndrome. We just hope they'll have an open mind and willingness to learn about the practical strategies which make a huge difference for our child."***
>
> *Parent of 11 year old*

Homework

- ☐ All homework to be set and visible via online platform so that student / parents can access outside of school. This gives CYP equal access to understanding what is required of them (rather than verbal instructions given at end of class when noise levels are high)
- ☐ Consider extended deadlines or reduced tasks (without reduced level of challenge) or alternative format (e.g. audio recorded essay, or paper-based tasks rather than screen-based tasks, or vice-versa, depending on what CYP finds easier to access)

Presentation of materials

- ☐ Use the current preferred font size and background colour for CYP (this may change as condition progresses). QTVI will be responsible for checking adequate font size / background colour / best pens for CYP. If not specified, Arial size 14 font usually good for access, and some pen suggestions are Stabilo, Berol Pens, Spectrum Broad pens, Pilot liquid ink sign pen 2.0 mm tip or the Edding Handwriter pen.
- ☐ Good quality photocopying of standard size worksheets (e.g. with good contrast). Do not enlarge (this places more information outside CYPs reduced visual field).
- ☐ Clutter-free (/streamlined) quality resources (e.g. photocopies with main diagram, or clutter-free white board)
- ☐ Teachers / TAs highlighting in different colours (e.g. comments in one colour, corrections in another) - ask CYP about preferred colours
- ☐ Give option of writing only on one side of paper - if pen shows through it becomes hard to read

Specific lessons and trips

- ☐ In PE: Talk with family / CYP / external support teachers in advance about which sports are scheduled over the next term to anticipate any issues (e.g. lack of floodlights on pitch during winter, difficult listening environments in noisy sports halls, helmets used in climbing which may dislodge implants and therefore prevent communication / safety, swimming safety for those with vestibular dysfunction etc.)
- ☐ In PE, ask CYP (discretely) to help identify what will be useful for them – e.g. using bright contrasting colour ball, using ball with bell inside, giving instructions before task begins etc.
- ☐ Risk assessments to be carried out and acted upon in advance of any extra-curricular or non-standard school activities (e.g. school trips, activities involving water, overnight stays, night time activities etc.)
- ☐ For residential trips, meet with CYP / family in advance to agree processes to be followed (e.g. for wake up / in emergency / damage to equipment / spare batteries on long journeys etc.)
- ☐ Seek subject specific advice e.g. RNIB and National Deaf Children's Society curriculum advice to identify practical considerations for subjects such as PE, science, maths, design and technology.

Remember – ask the student...

"What can I do to make this work for you?"

this will help to build self-advocacy skills