

# RAISE THE STANDARD

## The case for improving deaf children's education



published by



The British Deaf Association  
38 Victoria Place, Carlisle, CA1 1HU.

October 1985

---

# THE BDA: THE MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATION OF DEAF PEOPLE

The BDA was founded in 1890. Originally known as the British Deaf and Dumb Association, the BDA is now the largest organisation of deaf people in the country.

The BDA is principally concerned with the needs and problems of those most affected by deafness — those who were born deaf and those who were deafened in infancy. But the BDA also works to advance the interests of all deaf people in Britain, to develop their talents to the full, to help them become more self-reliant, to take their full place in society.

We educate by organising school-leaver courses and outdoor activities, drama courses, conferences, summer schools and youth rallies.

We develop new ways of helping deaf and hearing people to communicate — by conducting research, publishing a Sign Language dictionary, producing video programmes and educational material for adults and children.

We help deaf people through a national network of regional councils and local branches in which they can participate fully.

We are international and actively represent Britain on the World Federation of the Deaf.

The British Deaf Association  
38, Victoria Place, Carlisle CA1 1HU  
A Registered Charity. Charity No. 220820

# DECLARATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF DEAF CHILDREN

*This Declaration is published on the occasion of the 1985 British Deaf Awareness Week.*

*The Declaration sets out the objectives of The British Deaf Association in its campaign to win for deaf children the same educational choices and opportunities that hearing children now enjoy.*

## *The goals of education*

*The goals of education for deaf children are essentially the same as those for all children: to enlarge their knowledge, experience and imaginative understanding, and thus their awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment; and to equip them to be active participants in and responsible contributors to society, whilst being as self-reliant as possible.*

*(These goals are taken from the recommendations of the 1978 Warnock Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People)*

### **The right of access to -Total Communication-**

Every deaf child should have the right at the earliest possible age, to use a number of communication methods: Sign Language, finger-spelling, amplification of sound, speech, lip-reading, reading and writing, mime and gesture. Taken together, these methods are called "Total Communication" and their- flexible use, singly or in combination according to need, offers deaf children the best access to language and to effective communication with others.

### ***The right to clinical ascertainment and educational assessment***

In order to ensure that deaf children receive the most appropriate education, it is essential that their degree of hearing loss is ascertained early in life. Likewise, the education of deaf children must be based on regular assessment of their educational needs by teams with wide ranging skills. Such assessments should involve the parents and deaf adults with the necessary aptitude and motivation.

### ***The right to effective pre-school education***

Deaf children need to be exposed to "Total Communication" before starting formal schooling, to ensure that they have the earliest opportunity to start acquiring a language. In addition to mixing with hearing children of their own age, preschool deaf children also need the opportunity to mix with their deaf peers in nursery classes, day schools for the deaf, or as pupils in nursery classes in residential schools for the deaf

### ***The right to attend special schools for the deaf***

Every deaf child should have access, if needed, to a special school for the deaf. Such schools have been in existence for nearly 150 years and are one of the cornerstones of the deaf community. The BDA opposes indiscriminate closure of these special schools – sometimes for economic reasons alone – and supports local deaf communities campaigning to keep them open.

### ***The right to attend Partially Hearing Units***

Every deaf child should have the right of access, if needed, to a Partially Hearing Unit (PHU) that offers the same curriculum as the school of which it is part. The PHU should be seen as part of a complementary educational service. Furthermore, the BDA urgently calls for comprehensive research into PHUs, to determine which deaf students are most likely to benefit from them, their size in relation to the age-range of students attending them, and the effectiveness of the integration of hearing children at ordinary schools and deaf students at PHUs within these schools.

### ***The right to annual reviews of educational needs***

Every deaf child has the right as established in the 1981 Education Act to an annual review of how their special educational needs are being met. Parents have a right to be informed of the results of each review. The quality of review procedures varies greatly from school to school and should be standardised on existing models of good practice.

### ***The right of equal access to Further Education***

Every deaf child has the right entrenched in legislation, to Further Education. These rights are often not realised because deaf students are not given the specialist facilities they need – such as special literacy and other courses; interpreters and tutors; access to information about courses nationwide; the right to choose courses or vocational training regardless of their location nationally; and the right to financial support to pursue the courses of their choice.

### ***The right to be taught by deaf teachers***

Because many deaf people cannot now meet the present regulation that they must qualify to teach in hearing schools, deaf children are denied the opportunity to be taught by them, even though, alongside hearing colleagues, they could make a special contribution to their education. To gain this opportunity, deaf trainee teachers who are not able to teach hearing children because of their handicap, should be allowed to qualify to teach exclusively within the field of deaf education.

This Declaration has been issued by The Education Department of



The British Deaf Association 38 Victoria Place  
Carlisle CA 1 1HU 28 October, 1985

# INTRODUCTION



## Why deaf children need a better education

An education system that causes any child to leave it with a reading age of 83/4 must be judged a failure. Yet that is the prospect for deaf children; and that is the judgement of the deaf community. The system has failed us and this report is intended to make this fact more widely known, and to call for higher standards of deaf education. Deaf education is a Cinderella of the education system. Even worse, many authorities seem to have little or no understanding of deafness. They fail to realise that most deaf children are neither physically nor mentally handicapped and have quite different educational needs. They are simply deprived, to a greater or lesser degree, of the sense of hearing. Their learning difficulties stem solely from this sensory deprivation.

### **The quest for language**

A child who lacks language is a deprived child. All the bewilderment, frustrations and questioning of childhood are magnified a hundred-fold. And the relationship between child and parent is, likewise, much more difficult to establish and nurture. The quest for language, therefore, for an

effective means of communication, is of great importance both to the child and to the family. The quest starts in the home, even before formal schooling, and continues through the school years. Traditionally, deaf education has been the responsibility of schools for the deaf. However, in spite of resistance by parents of deaf children, local deaf communities and the BDA, the number of such schools is being steadily reduced. The policy now is to integrate deaf and hearing children, irrespective of the protests. Not that all the schools for the deaf are perfect; far from it. Nearly half of them have not yet adopted the philosophy of "Total Communication" - an approach that has been described as "a springboard for formal language development" and "the key to an understanding of the child's social and cultural world". Total Communication makes available, as required, all the available methods of communication: Sign Language, finger-spelling, amplification of sound, speech, lip-reading, reading and writing, mime and gesture. A number of schools, however, still rely on teaching deaf children language in the same oral way as teaching a hearing child. Which leaves the child with the worst of both worlds — without language and without another means of effective communication.

# Blighted lives

It is no wonder, then, that so many deaf children leave school with reading skills of a hearing child half their age. And they suffer for it right through their lives. They are effectively denied access to books and newspapers. They are denied the full understanding of television that Teletext and Ceefax bring. They are denied the chance of effective further education and have little prospect of higher education. And their chances of getting a job and starting a fruitful career are seriously diminished.

The cards are stacked against deaf youngsters all along the line. As this report will show, the lack of adequate educational provision, allied to the stubborn attitudes of many Local Education Authorities, keep many of them out of the country's colleges. And woe betide the young deaf person who chooses teaching as a career. The regulations on teacher training make it necessary for deaf people first to train as teachers of hearing children. Thus a teaching career is closed for all but a few. Even worse, the regulations are currently being amended so that all trained teachers, hearing and deaf, will have to teach for a time in an ordinary school before taking up a career in deaf education.

## The BDA's education Programme

The BDA's education objective is to give effect to the Declaration of the Educational Rights and Needs of Deaf Children, set out in the opening pages of this report. And that objective is being pursued through a vigorous campaign and an education programme that, with limited resources, aims to fill some of the gaps in the system, at least for a small number of deaf children.

The BDA runs regular school-leaver courses, adventure courses and an annual summer school. There are specialised BDA courses — on subjects as varied as poetry and wood-carving, drama and computer programming. There are educational travel tours and, in 1985, there was an international, week-long educational gathering of deaf youngsters from a dozen countries.

And the BDA consistently campaigns — for example, against the closure of some schools for the deaf, and for the adoption of Total Communication. The BDA takes up cases of injustice, consults with Government, sits on deaf education working parties, and applies pressure on Parliament.

## Raise the standard

This report is part of a concerted effort by the BDA to arouse public concern about the poor state of deaf education, and to rally support for the campaign.

The deaf community is part of this campaign. The BDA's members and affiliates, representing a significant section of the deaf community, voted unanimously at their 1984 Annual Delegates Conference for the policy summarised in the Declaration.

Now hearing people are asked to respond to the campaign. The BDA's appeal goes to Directors of Education, Chairmen of Education Committees, Heads of Deaf Schools, school governors, teachers and their unions, parents of deaf children . . . and to all other interested individuals and organisations.

You are asked to read this report. And then to signify your support by completing the Campaign Coupon that you will find in the closing pages.

October, 1985

## Communication for Education

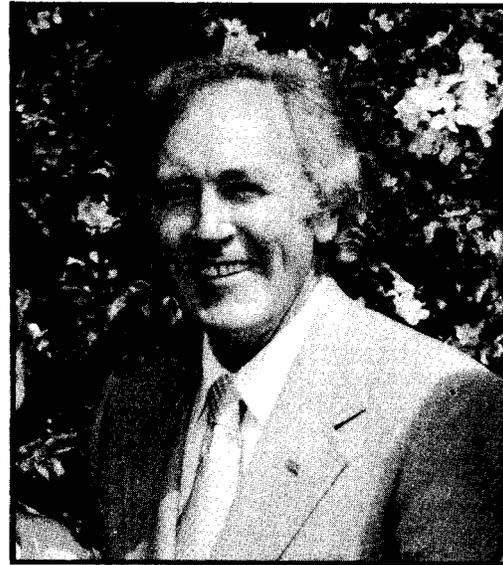
It is no accident that the first "Right" we call for in our Declaration of Educational Rights should be for "access to Total Communication". As has already been described, Total Communication is a flexible system based on the use of hands, ears and voice. It is also at the heart of a major debate that has concerned the deaf community for over a hundred years.

Total Communication was born out of the failure of the traditional oral method of instruction: the method that uses residual hearing and sight as the primary means through which language and speech-reading skills are acquired.

Those who believe in this oral way of teaching and learning, oppose the use of Sign Language because they think it inhibits the development of speech. Those who advocate Total Communication, on the other hand, argue that the oralists are too inflexible; that the oralist way has led to a needlessly low standard of reading, composition and a range of academic subjects; and that every method of communication has its place, according to situation.

The BDA believes that the oralist tradition has cut off educational opportunities for deaf children by expecting them to adapt to educational programmes that do not fit their needs. It is a tradition that perpetuates the discrimination and paternalism of those who assume the dependence of deaf children whatever their intellect and talents. We argue for free and unrestricted communication as a means of breaking down the barriers between hearing and deaf people — between mother and child, between teacher and pupil, between deaf children and hearing friends. We argue that Total Communication is liberating because it uses whatever residual hearing a child may have, and whatever modern aids to hearing are available; but it does not, as the oralists would have it, depend on these to the exclusion of other ways of communicating.

We argue for Total Communication because we know it is effective.



America's Dr. Denton.

## American pioneers

The term 'Total Communication' was first used in 1968 by an American educator to describe his approach to teaching deaf children in Santa Ana, California. It was subsequently adopted by Dr. David Denton at the Maryland School for the Deaf. Dr. Denton writes that "the use of spontaneous speech among our pupils is greater now than ever before". The school has run classes for families throughout the State as well as for the professional faculty and staff. Explaining the day-to-day use of Total Communication, Dr. Denton concludes that "the highly visual and dramatic language of signs operates as the foundation of Total Communication, reinforcing, under-girding and clarifying those minimal clues available through speech-reading. Likewise, minimal auditory clues are enhanced and reinforced by signs and speech-reading. For all of us, then, communication is total or multi-dimensional . . . one dimension enhancing, reinforcing and enriching the other".

## The British experience

As late as 1979, the majority of deaf children were being educated in an oral system. At that time, Dr. R. Conrad published research ("The Deaf School

Child") that showed the average reading age of deaf school leavers to be 83/4, and that, on average, only 10% of their speech was intelligible to a hearing person. More recent research by Dr. J. G. Kyle of Bristol University, confirms these findings.

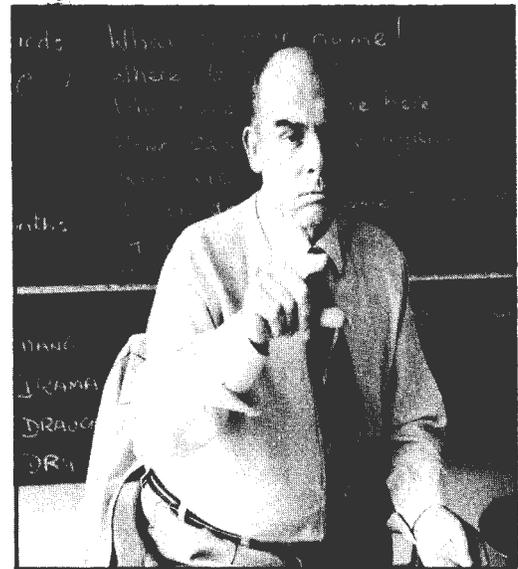
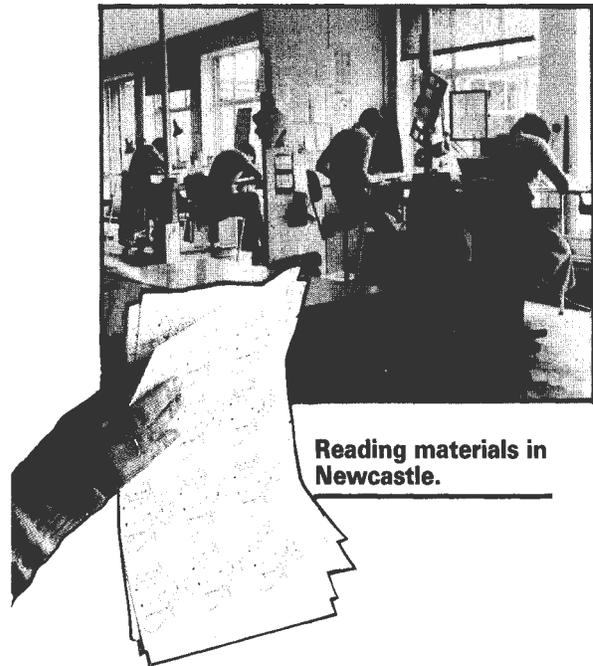
It is only about ten years since the first few British schools began to adapt to Total Communication. Yet its success has been such that 47% of special schools for the deaf now use it, and 13% of Partially Hearing Units (PHUs) that have been established within hearing schools. Some educational authorities continue to use the oralist method but the swing is encouragingly towards more enlightened teaching methods. It is worth noting that the Leeds Education Committee has not only introduced Sign Language into its Special Schools and PHUs; it has also introduced it as a subject for study by hearing children in hearing schools.

Three initiatives illustrate the change that has begun to take place.

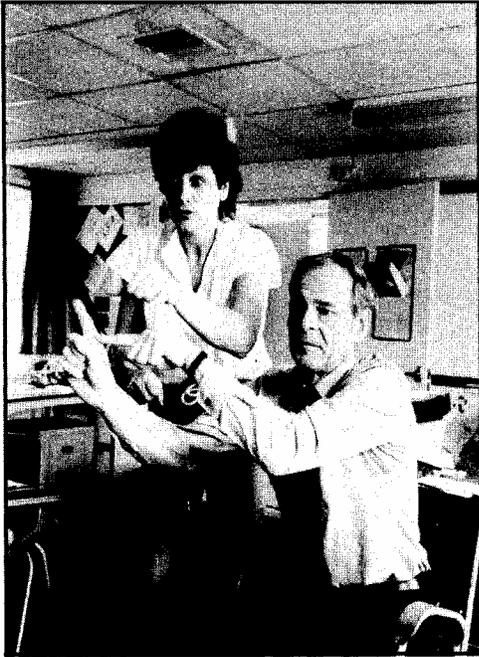
\* **The Northern Counties School for the Deaf, Newcastle**, was one of the first to switch to Total Communication. For four years, in co-operation with the BDA, it has been providing reading material relevant to the children's own interests and needs, and more recently, special Topic Packs for the senior school.

\***The Alice Elliot School, Liverpool**, is one of the few to employ a deaf teacher of the deaf. And working with the BDA and Manpower Services Commission, a number of deaf adults are employed to teach Sign Language to staff, pupils and parents.

\***The Arnold Derrymount School's Deaf Unit, Nottingham**, employs a deaf person with a hearing teacher, to teach English as a second language through British Sign Language.



Working together in Nottingham.



## The debate goes on

Over 56,000 deaf people, most of them profoundly deaf, use Sign Language as their first or preferred language and support the use of Total Communication in the education of deaf children. There is a growing band of hearing parents who find that Sign Language improves the relationship with their children. And in more and more schools for deaf children, Total Communication is being seen both as a "springboard for formal language development", as Dr. Denton puts it, and as a philosophy by which to chart the way forward. But the debate with the oralists goes on. Certainly both sides say that deaf children have to live in a hearing world and that every deaf child has the right to be an oral success. But the BDA and the Total Communication advocates will add that no child should be faced with the possibility of oral failure, and that every child has the right to acquire language — a mastery that can best be achieved by opening all the communication doors that are available. Only in this way will deaf children finally triumph over adversity and realize their full potential.

## ASCERTAINMENT AND ASSESSMENT

**PETER** was an "at-risk" baby – he had contracted peri-natal jaundice, and he did not respond to sound when given the routine hearing screening test.

In spite of protests from his parents, it was not until Peter was 9 months old that he was referred to an audiological clinic. His deafness was immediately diagnosed.

His parents were patronised rather than helped. "Just talk to him normally" they were told. "Don't worry, he'll be fine". They were not encouraged to contact deaf adults for guidance or told about communication through Sign Language.

**DAVID** was two years old before his maternal grandmother suspected he was deaf. He was the first child of the family and his parents didn't know when he should have begun to talk. He babbled and then fell silent.

It was only a year later that David was seen by two doctors who diagnosed deafness. They didn't offer any positive help to the parents. Eventually the family settled near a school for the deaf. But even there the guidance was years behind the times. The school was strongly opposed to the use of Sign Language. "Wear an apron with pockets", David's mother was told, "and keep your hands in them when speaking to David so that you won't be tempted to sign".

Such stories are not unfamiliar to parents of deaf children up and down the country. Ignorance, prejudice, archaic attitudes . . . all conspire to compound the difficulty of overcoming hearing loss and gaining access to an appropriate education.

It is not enough to proclaim the educational rights of deaf children if they have to go through the first crucial years of life with their disability undetected. Yet there are cases of 5-year olds who have slipped through the screening net and who are simply assumed to be 'a bit slow for their age' or 'not very quick on the uptake'. The screening of new-born infants is now possible using the

Auditory Response Cradle. This high-technology device can complete a screening test in a few minutes – and yet it is available in only a very few hospitals. There are other micro-systems and there are neo-natal screening tests. And there is the 'high risk' registry as a means of assessing hearing loss through testing specific medical factors rather than by screening.

In the real world of Britain in 1985, however, if a child is not identified as 'at risk', the chances are that the views of parents who suspect deafness in their child, will not be acted upon early enough by health workers. Parents often pick up tell-tale hints, though with first children they may not have the experience to compare normal with abnormal hearing. As in David's case, a grandparent, having the experience, is often the first to notice deafness in a child.

### **Education to fit the child**

Once the extent of hearing loss has been established, there begins the continuous process of assessing the child's educational potential and needs.

The 1981 Education Act legislates for the involvement of the parents in the assessment and placement process. It is not enough to inform them; they must be equal members of the assessment team. The Act also makes it clear that the team must contain a variety of skills –from the educationalist and the psychologist to the social worker and GP. All have a part to play in determining the educational path ahead. It must be said that whilst such multi-disciplinary teams are legally necessary, they are not always in evidence as they should be.

Nor is this the only area in which the system operates in a way that fails to meet the deaf child's needs. For the oral traditions die hard and educational placements are still too often made according to the child's ability to speak. The BDA believes that the means of communication a child prefers to use – whether Sign Language, finger-spelling or speech, for example – should be considered when the educational assessment is made.

The objective must be to improve the deaf child's chances of acquiring English language, through

placement in an environment that is conducive to learning – that is, one that provides language visually as well as in speech.

### **Annual review**

The 1981 Education Act introduced a procedure for the annual review of the special educational needs of deaf children. The intention is that parents will be kept informed of their child's scholastic achievement, whilst the school will maintain a high standard of educational practice. If the legislation is consistently to be put into effect, **firstly**, school staffs will need to devise and implement proper monitoring procedures to review pupils' progress right across the curriculum. **Secondly**, parents must be invited to participate more fully in reviews. And **thirdly**, given the increasing use of Total Communication in schools – a welcome development – Sign Language interpreters must be available to enable deaf parents to communicate with staff about their children's progress.

## LEARNING BEFORE SCHOOL

A good description of the implications of child deafness for both mother and child has been written by the late Claire Brooke-Hughes, who was a DHSS Social Work Service Officer: "At an age at which the toddler is usually expressing his needs verbally, the deaf child is still screaming in an effort to make his wants known. As these needs become more sophisticated his frustration increases. His mother may be unable to explain to him the reasons for her actions or her prohibitions, and some young deaf people grow up knowing that society demands that certain rules are obeyed without having any understanding of the reasoning upon which they are based.

"It is not possible to give the deaf child the same explanation of the world around him that the normally hearing child absorbs, not only by direct information but also by listening effortlessly to the conversation of others whilst he himself is occupied with his play. Nor is the severely deaf child's image of the world the same as that of normally hearing children. He has to learn to interpret the difference between his mother's frown of concentration, puzzlement, worry or that of anger since the tone of her voice cannot tell him and he may not for some years have a clear verbal code for these states of mind.

"The mother may be faced with extreme difficulties in developing emotionally satisfying communication with her deaf child and, although he may begin to comprehend some of what she is saying to him, he may be unable to give spontaneous expression to his own feelings. Nor will he develop until much later than the normally hearing child, a sufficiently sophisticated vocabulary to enable him to understand and control his immediate emotions or to have very much understanding of the emotions of others".

### Acquiring language

It is evident from this graphic description of the communication gap between deaf child and hearing parent, that the quicker the child is able to acquire language the better for all in the family. The most critical years are from 0 to 3 and the ways of learning then are through hearing, seeing and using language.

Tragically, parents are too rarely given enough



information about the acquisition of language. They are led to suppose that the test of success is the ability of the deaf child to speak and to lip-read without fault. This creates quite unnecessary stresses, and can indeed widen the gulf between the parent and the child. Once again, we return to the conflict between the oralists and those such as ourselves who argue for the use of Total Communication.

It is vital, in our view, that parents and children communicate in a relaxed way, using all the methods of communication available and particularly those for which the child shows a facility.

### Outside support

Parents of deaf children can do so much for themselves. But they must have access to the educational authorities, among others, to give them the information and the additional support their children need in order to reach the attainment levels of normally hearing children. Specifically, Local Education Authorities should not only provide the opportunity for pre-school deaf children to mix with their hearing peers, but also enable them to be with others who share their handicap — either in nursery classes, day schools for the deaf, or as pupils in nursery classes in residential schools for the deaf.

Most LEAs employ peripatetic teachers of the deaf who visit deaf children in their homes before they are of formal school age. However, many of these lack Total Communication skills and thus tend to

entrench the mistaken view that the children have first to master speech and lip-reading. The BDA therefore calls for the training of existing peripatetic teachers and the recruitment of many more who are able to take a more enlightened view about the acquisition of language and the nurturing of the deaf child.

# SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF

How special is "special"?

Schools for deaf children by definition have to meet their special needs. In this respect they are "special" schools but, in reality, they closely resemble ordinary schools with pupils drawn from the entire ability range. What makes them special are the methods, especially the communication methods, they use to educate their pupils.

Since the 1981 Education Act, it has been increasingly the practice of Local Education Authorities to associate the education of deaf children with the education of physically handicapped and mentally handicapped children. As evidence of this they categorise the curriculum needs of deaf children as 'Mainstream plus Support', 'Modified' or 'Developmental' —the curriculum categories for 5-16 year olds as designated for special school pupils by the Department of Education and Science (DES).

The DES fails to understand (though we have explained it often enough) that 'deaf education' has to be separated from such categorising; and that the aim of a school for deaf children is to `teach in a way that will ensure access to the regular curriculum, the curriculum for normally hearing children. The special access deaf children need is to this curriculum, not to the school buildings.

And the special value of a school for the deaf is that it is a place where deaf children can be with their peers rather than be a minority within a young hearing community.

The erroneous public perception of special schools for the deaf probably stems from the 1978 Report on The Education of Handicapped Children and Young People by the Committee chaired by Mary Warnock. The emphasis of the Report was



**Special — the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf, Doncaster.**

properly on the needs of the individual but it surely did not intend to label every child with learning difficulties as 'handicapped'. This is particularly so, since deaf children may be educated in a variety of settings - a residential or day school for the deaf, a residential or day school for the partially hearing, in Partially Hearing Units (PHUs) attached to ordinary schools, or in ordinary schools with the support of a teacher of the deaf. And the deaf children in such schools have abilities that span the entire range, to the very highest levels, depending on the quality and extent of the support they are given.

In 1985, there were over 3,000 children in 66 Special Schools for the Deaf in England and in Wales, and over 5,000 in Partially Hearing Units (PHUs). As the table shows, there are also over 750 children in such institutions in Scotland.

An increasing number of schools are converting to the use of Total Communication, both as a social philosophy and in teaching practice. The Jordanstown School in Belfast is the most recent advocate of Total Communication - a conversion for which the parents of the deaf children are partly responsible.

# Special schools: facts and figures

---

## DEAF CHILDREN AND PARTIALLY HEARING CHILDREN IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND UNITS IN THE UK

Country	No. of deaf pupils	No. of Partially Hearing-pupils	Source
England	3,107	4,830	DES
Wales	231	566	Welsh Education Office
*Scotland 1983	_____	759 _____	Scottish Educational Statistics Office
Northern Ireland	_____	NOT AVAILABLE _____	N.I. Education Office, Special Education Branch
Total	3,338	5,396	

\*Since the 1981 Education Act abolished categories of handicap, statistics on deaf and partially hearing pupils are not collected separately. The figure relates to all deaf and partially hearing pupils receiving their education in Local Authority schools and units and grant-aided schools. (There are no Independent Schools for the Deaf in Scotland).

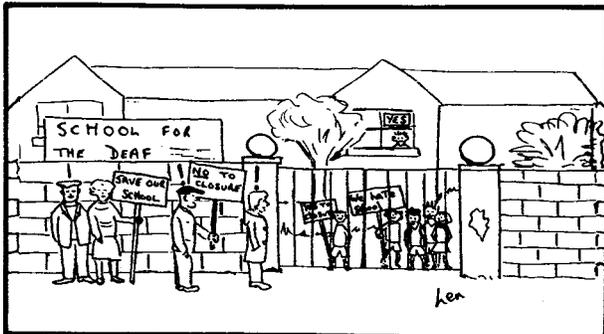
---

## Special Schools under Threat

In a letter to the BDA General Secretary of February 4th, 1985, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, wrote:

**"The Government foresees a continuing requirement for special schools for children with hearing loss".**

This optimistic note is not sustained, however, for in the very next paragraph, the letter refers to a consultation document reviewing special schools "in the light of falling rolls and the continuing trend towards integration. **The document recognises that there will need to be some closures . . . .**".



The importance and popularity of Special Schools for the Deaf cannot be in doubt. The reduced number of pupils is due, not to reduced interest, but to the reduced number of children requiring such education, in line with national population trends. Indeed, we argue that smaller classes are a positive benefit in specialist teaching situations and are no justification for school closures. Of course, we accept that there will be occasion to close schools, but we are bound to conclude that it is now national policy to close some on economic grounds alone.

One heartening aspect of an otherwise depressing picture has been the way in which so many local deaf communities have resisted closure, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. The BDA has given its full support and will continue to do so until the educational right of all deaf children to access to a Special School is part of Government policy.

Here is how three communities - in Heston, Nottingham and Garvel - have challenged the closure of their schools.

### A long haul for Heston

Heston School for the Deaf, only a few miles from London airport, was built in 1956 for 100 pupils. In 1984 there were only 27, many others having been placed in PHUs attached to mainstream schools. The building was only expected to last for 20 years and repairs are now very expensive. Moving the site is becoming a financial necessity. A working party set up in 1980, comprising staff, educationalists and officials, with the BDA in an advisory capacity, has now had five years of discussions yet the situation remains confused. The essence of the plan agreed by the working party is for the establishment of a Community School with space for deaf clubs, access to a sports hall, a parent/teacher meeting place and a resource centre for the local deaf community. A radical concept and one that the community eagerly supports. An equally welcome part of the plan is to halt the dispersal of deaf children from the school to PHUs and to close the PHUs in the area. However, in spite of the demands of parents that the plan be implemented, financial problems and an unsatisfactory juggling of sites have continued to frustrate everyone concerned - and still no decisions have been taken.

### Near thing at Nottingham

It was only in June, 1985 that Nottingham LEA decided that Ewing School for the Deaf could stay open. For months previously, the local community had rallied support to resist threats of closure. On November 3rd, 1984, 160 people attended a public meeting organised by the Nottingham and Notts. Society for the Deaf. Scores of parents were there. The local MP, Councillors, educationalists, social workers and the press were there. And Susanne Turfus, the BOA Education Officer was on the platform. The questions they had all come to discuss were whether the school should close, or whether it should be extended to house a range of

additional support services for parents and teachers. The meeting decided that the school should remain open and be developed as a resource centre for the deaf community; that parents should be informed about and able to choose the communication methods most appropriate for their deaf children; and that further consultation be held on the organisation of the education service.

The local community sustained their pressure on the authorities and the latest news is that the Ewing School will stay open. In addition, the LEA is recommending the opening in September, 1985 of a special Signed English class - a remarkable breakthrough for Total Communication in a school previously committed to oralism.

These developments would not have happened without the impact made by the deaf community and the parents of the deaf children. The Nottingham Society is proving its full and continued support for the school by offering training in Sign Language to the professionals working in the special Signed English class. So far, so good. It remains to be seen whether the LEA and the school authorities will allow the local deaf community to contribute directly to the education of deaf pupils. But with the success achieved already, everything seems possible.

### **Good going for Garvel**

The Garvel Deaf Centre in Strathclyde is a school for deaf children where Total Communication is in use. The Local Authority decided to close the school and transfer the children and staff to one of two other schools.

The local deaf community was not consulted.

When the news finally got out, their reaction was strong, swift - and decisive.

As in Nottingham, a crucial element of the campaign was a public meeting called to discuss the proposed closure. In this case, the venue was the Greenock Deaf Club. The deaf community was well represented, parents of school-children spoke, the BOA was there, and so were a number of local Councillors.

A significant aspect of the Garvel campaign was that the debate focused not only on the

continuance of the school, but also on the continued use of Total Communication in the school, and the Sign Language environment that followed from this. One parent made the point that the importance to his son was not just to be with other children, but with children who could sign. Another strength was the support mobilised from beyond Garvel itself. Indeed, two MPs, the National Deaf Children's Society, the National Union of the Deaf and the BDA, were among those adding their voice to the local clamour to keep the school open.

Councillors at the meeting spoke without prejudice but with a lot of defensiveness. They promised more consultation.

Two months later, the Strathclyde Regional Council voted to keep the Garvel School open.

### **PHUs: more research Needed**

Partially Hearing Units - PHUs - are special units attached to ordinary schools. There are a number of misconceptions about their role that are having a damaging affect on their use.

The first misconception is that PHUs and Special Schools for the Deaf are in some way rivals within the deaf education service. This is not, in fact, the case. Indeed, the BDA sees them both as complementary, and part of the range of educational provision offered to all deaf and hearing-impaired pupils.

The second misconception is that hearing - impaired children across the nursery-primary-secondary age-range can be placed together in a PHU.

This is, of course, educationally absurd. Yet it is all too common for such 5 to 12 years olds to be placed in the same PHU. It is also frequently the case that profoundly deaf children are placed in PHUs. This may be because the PHU is conveniently located, or because parents prefer to perceive their child as partially hearing rather than profoundly deaf. Local Education Authorities, on the other hand, may have a preference for PHU education over Special Schools on the grounds of economy.

The BDA is concerned that the role of the PHU is, as yet, not adequately defined or understood within

the education service. What is needed is 'more research to determine the functions of a PHU, to identify those who would most benefit from PHUs, and to propose the ideal unit size and pupil age range.

### **Partially-hearing: on the fringe**

Claire Brooke-Hughes, already quoted in this report, wrote movingly on the difficulties facing partially-hearing children, which "are mostly unappreciated", particularly when they are in groups. "Some", she wrote, "remain on the fringe of the group and participate in few of its activities. Others are intensely lonely and have few friends. The concentration required in an effort to keep up with the hearing community can result in a considerable degree of stress . . . . Given appropriate help, the majority will be able to find their place in the normal community but some remain vulnerable to stress . . . .".

"Given appropriate help". It is surely essential that the role of PHUs is looked at as a matter of urgency, so that they can' provide the right help - the right education for the right young people at the right time in their lives.

## **FURTHER EDUCATION: LEAs EVADE THEIR DUTY**

**"Local Education Authorities have a duty, which is not widely recognised, to provide for all young people who want continued full-time education between the ages of 16 and 19, either in school or in an establishment of further education, though not necessarily whichever of the two the individual prefers. It is essential that they should fulfill this duty and ensure**

**that adequate numbers of places ... are available to and taken up by young people with special educational needs".**

(1978 Warnock Report)

Access to further education for deaf people in Britain falls far short of the ideals of equality of opportunity enshrined in education legislation. The 1944 and 1981 Education Acts both stressed the duty of Local Education Authorities to provide further education for all young people who want it. And this was re-stated in a letter to us from a junior Education Minister in February 1985, which stressed that LEAs "have adequate powers". However, the legislation does not state that the LEA has legally to maintain students at its own expense if they are being educated under the aegis of an LEA in another county. This loophole has been eagerly seized upon by many LEAs and used to deprive deaf students of further education. The problem arises because many LEAs fail to provide the special support services that are needed: perhaps Sign Language interpretation, extra tutoring or help with note-taking. Furthermore, there may well not be a suitable course for deaf students in their LEAs area; and if there is not, the parents of deaf students may well not be informed of where suitable courses and support services may be found outside the county.

### **Some cases in point**

North Yorkshire County Council is an example of the Local Authority that unfairly discriminates against deaf students. Because it failed to provide proper provision within the county for hearing-impaired students, a deaf youngster found an FE place outside the county that offered the support he needed. Whereupon North Yorkshire refused to pay his maintenance costs. The BDA intervened and the outcome of this case is still awaited. We are currently challenging a similar case in Salford.

### **A Case from the Midlands**

John is profoundly deaf and had been at the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf since he was four. When the time came to consider his further education, he decided he wanted to stay on at the School's Further Education Department to take a course in light vehicle body repair and paint-spraying. The School agreed. So did his parents and they applied for a grant to their Local Education Authority.

The LEA refused the application, even on appeal, arguing that they could provide identical training locally. The Head of the Yorkshire School's Further Education Department tried to negotiate with the LEA. When the LEA said that the Doncaster course was unsuitable for John because no garage would employ him, the School found a garage near John's home that offered him a months work experience and said he was certainly trainable.

The LEA's response was to offer John a place in their own local college to undergo work preparation designed for handicapped people. John stuck to his wish to go on the car-body repair course.

Eventually John got a place on a Youth Training Scheme, painting and decorating, but this turned out to be a poor substitute and offered no qualification at the end of it. If he had been on the Doncaster course, he could have taken at least two City and Guilds Testing Certificates in car-body repair and paint spraying.

John's YTS course will be completed later in 1985. At present, he has no job in view. Through its obduracy, the LEA has succeeded only in damaging the future of a young man whose deafness already imposes a severe handicap.

### **A case from the South**

Sue and David are deaf and attended a Partially Hearing Unit until they left in July 1985. Both are bright and wanted to continue their education. David wanted to take a course in Industrial Electronics at the Further Education Department of the Yorkshire Residential School for the Deaf. Sue chose a course in Office Skills and Commercial New Technology. As a matter of courtesy the School informed their Local Education Authority.

The LEA made it known that they would refuse any grant applications made and that, if the parents still wanted their children to attend the FE Department, they would have to pay the fees

themselves. The LEA proposed instead that Sue and David attend one of their own work preparation courses for average and below-average students. However, this does not, as the LEA claimed, offer identical training to that at Doncaster, which is unique and offers deaf students full support services.

After seeing both families, the FE Department offered Sue and David the places they wanted. They then made formal application for sponsorship to the LEA. Predictably this was refused. The parents have appealed this decision but the outcome is not yet known.

### **Specialist FE places**

The problem is exacerbated by the shortage of specialist places available to deaf further education students. Those that do exist are based in a small number of Residential Schools for the Deaf such as at Doncaster, Derby, Brighton and Exeter, where 16-19 year olds have residential places that are funded by their LEAs. There is also the ILEA City Lit Centre for the Deaf in London, which provides services on a daily basis. But there is no centralised funding for deaf FE students, and they have to negotiate individually with their own LEA or Manpower Services Commission.

### **An end to wasted opportunity**

The 1978 Warnock Report, already quoted in these pages, made the point that "unless opportunities are available to young people to continue their education in special or ordinary schools, in colleges of further education or in other establishments . . . all the earlier efforts made on their behalf may . . . come to nothing".

For a long time now, the BDA has been arguing for more flexible provision of further education. And we have to repeat here the three modest demands that we have been making, and will continue to make, until there is a positive response from the authorities:

Prospective deaf students must be allowed to choose a course outside their LEA area, if this offers the necessary support services, without forfeiting their rights to grants from their home LEA.

Funding of courses, whether by LEA, MSC or other body, for students of all ages must include the cost of support services.

LEAs must ensure that information about all further education opportunities and nationwide support services are made available to deaf students and their parents.

## A glimmer of hope

The authorities will not readily accede to these demands and it is essential that the issue be kept alive and pressure for change increased. One MP at least is following this approach - Clement Freud, whose 10-Minute Rule Bill on the subject was introduced on May 15th, 1985.

Mr. Freud's initiative - The Handicapped Young Persons bill - is in two sections. One section sets out to improve parents' rights of appeal against the LEAs assessment and placement of children with special educational needs. The second section, especially relevant here, seeks "to extend protection and provision to the group which currently gets the roughest deal - the handicapped 16-19 year olds".

As Mr. Freud explained in his speech: "A handicapped young person needs to be provided with the opportunity for further education. Some will have missed a substantial amount of schooling and taken longer to assimilate skills. Others need further education for the chance to live an independent life. The opportunity to lead that kind of life can be crucially affected by three years within or outwith education. The present loophole means that some young people - those with less caring Local Education Authorities or with less articulate parents than others - are being denied opportunities which are rightfully theirs. I submit that it is plumb wrong that provision for handicapped people should be a lottery, as it is now, depending not on need or ability but on where one lives and how loudly one's parents can shout".

And the BDA says "Amen" to that.



16-19 year old handicapped children get "roughest deal".

# DEAF TEACHERS FOR DEAF STUDENTS

It is a self-evident truth within the deaf community that the more young deaf people are able to mix with deaf adults, the better they are likely to communicate, and the more they will grow in confidence. Knowing that there are deaf adults leading normal, secure lives gives the youngsters a sense of hope that might otherwise be absent.

The same is true in the world of deaf education. Indeed, a well-known American educator, Dr. Edward C. Merrill, former President of the Washington-based college for the deaf, Gallaudet College, has stated: "The deaf professional is an outstanding model for young deaf children and will, in all probability, be able to relate to and communicate with a deaf constituency much better than a hearing person". On the basis of this thinking, it might be supposed that our schools for the deaf would employ many deaf teachers. In a logical world, perhaps. In Britain today, the supposition is false. As a Minister explained in a letter to the BDA General Secretary:

"Qualified teacher status, a requirement for all teachers in maintained schools, must cover the teaching of able-bodied as well as handicapped pupils. Teachers of the deaf and partially hearing must be capable of teaching in the wider sense as well as in their handicap expertise".

So: a teacher of the deaf has first to be able to teach hearing children. And that is one reason why there are so few deaf teachers of the deaf. A second reason is that a deaf person can be rejected for teacher training on medical grounds — for example, because they are unable to hear an ordinary conversational voice at a distance of twenty feet.

It is right that deaf trainee teachers should have the same academic entry qualifications as hearing trainees and should, as far as possible, follow the same course that qualifies them to teach hearing and deaf children. But there seems to be no sensible reason why, if speech is a problem, deaf trainees should not have their teaching practice in a school for the deaf or unit for the partially hearing.

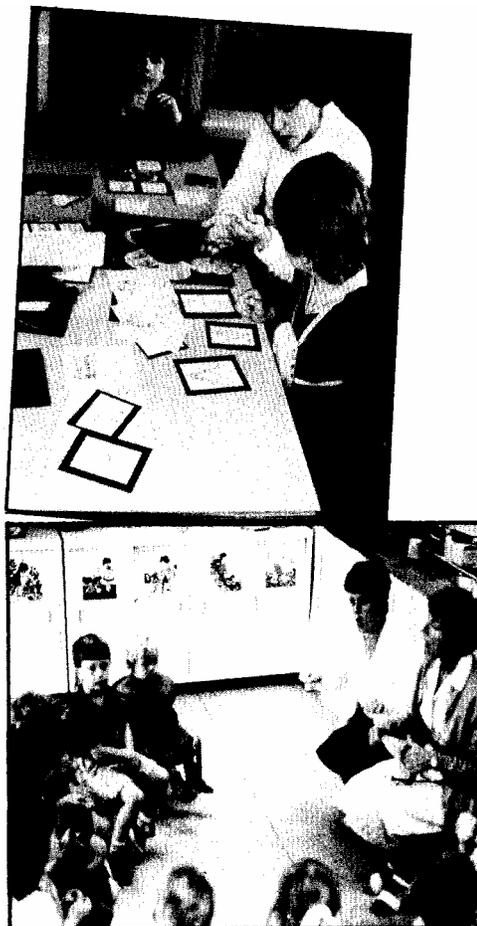
The BDA has long proposed two solutions to the problem. The first is that suitably qualified deaf people who want to teach both hearing and deaf children, undergo teaching practice in both

ordinary and special schools. And secondly, that those whose speech and hearing bars them from teaching hearing children, should qualify to teach exclusively within the deaf education system. When these simple proposals are put to the education authorities, no good reasons are presented for not adopting them. The response is simply the blinkered negative of the bureaucrat. This report is yet another occasion for submitting our ideas. We await a more constructive reply this time.



**Rare species – a deaf teacher of the deaf**

**Deaf adults have a role to play in the classroom too**



## RAISING THE STANDARD: THE

As we conclude this survey of deaf education, we remind readers of just one fact, repeated through these pages - that the average reading age of the deaf school-leaver is 83/4. No other statistic better illustrates the terrible waste of young people's potential. No other statistic is needed to strengthen the resolve of the deaf community in general, or the BDA in particular, to fight on to raise our educational standards.

These standards can be raised. This report has shown that given appropriate support, the highest grades can be within the grasp of deaf youngsters. The fact is that there are profoundly deaf academics. There are deaf and partially hearing professionals in education, engineering, management and other fields. They set the yardstick by which the educational potential of deaf people has to be measured. This is the yardstick of the educationally deprived - young people denied the same opportunities as their hearing peers.

This report has set out the case for improving deaf education right through the age range, from infancy to the end of the 'teens. It is a fair case and one that can be quite readily met if the political

## CAMPAIGN FOR DEAF EDUCATION

will existed. But that will does not exist and we know that only a vigorous campaign will set the wheels in motion.



Profoundly deaf — Top. Research Worker in Bristol. Left to right: Teacher in Liverpool; TV Presenter in Newcastle; Management in Carlisle; and Engineering in Gourock, Scotland.

---

## The campaign

This report is published at the beginning of 1985  
Support for BDA Week 1984 came from:-  
Malcolm Bruce MP, Liberal, Gordon,  
Scotland

British Deaf Awareness (BOA) Week. This is now  
a regular date on the deaf community's calendar;  
and an occasion when we make an extra effort to  
reach out to hearing people, to put our case to  
them and to seek their support. Many of our 177  
branches are arranging local events at this time to  
publicise their activities, the problems deaf people  
face every day of their lives, and the new  
Declaration of Educational Rights and Needs that  
is published at the beginning of this report.  
Nationally, we are bringing the Declaration to the  
attention of the Government, MPs, the political  
parties, local authorities, educational and teaching  
bodies, and other influential organisations and  
individuals. And we are calling for all the rights  
listed within the Declaration to be made a reality.  
Not by the end of the century. But now.  
Most important of all, we call on readers of this  
report, deaf and hearing alike, to give us their  
support. With your help, we can at last achieve  
justice for thousands of children who are deprived  
not only of hearing but of the same educational  
opportunities as everyone else.



Support for BDA Week  
1984 came from:-  
Malcolm Bruce MP,  
Liberal, Gordon,  
Scotland



Robert Wareing MP  
Labour, Liverpool,  
West Derby



John Hannam MP,  
Conservative  
Exeter

## **AN INVITATION TO SUPPORT THE BDA**

The BDA is a registered charity and depends on public support to sustain its nation-wide programme. One form of support is to contribute towards our funds. Another is to join our campaign. If you would like to help, please complete either or both the forms below and return them to us at: The British Deaf Association, 38 Victoria Place, Carlisle CA1 1 HU.



**In Sign Language:  
“Thank you”**