



Taking over at Mary Hare

In the first of an occasional series in which members talk about their new posts, **Peter Gale**, the new Principal of Mary Hare School, takes this opportunity to present the school to BATOD colleagues

It is great to have this opportunity to communicate directly with colleagues in the profession. My aim is to give you an overview of what the modern Mary Hare is and to correct some misunderstandings that might arise within the profession. I also want to look at how we might recast the relationship between mainstream and our specialist setting and work more closely together. After all, we all want the same things - happy and well-adjusted deaf children and young people fulfilling their potential.

Mary Hare will only exist as long as professionals, parents and (more frequently than you might think) pupils themselves seek us out. As I wrote in a previous article for this magazine, the things that this subset of deaf pupils tells us again and again is that they could not

hear/understand well enough in their previous setting and that they were unhappy being the only deaf pupil or one of a very small number.

If the 76% of deaf learners who are in mainstream are not expressing these views, the inclusion agenda has nothing to fear from a small number of providers like us meeting the needs of those who feel they need us. My dream would be for LAs, knowing the overall numbers to be small, to see us as part of their continuum of provision. A young person coming to Mary Hare should not be seen as having been lost to the authority, but rather given by the authority a provision which will meet that individual's needs. So the funding Authority should absolutely take credit for any success at Mary Hare and the pupil's achievements should absolutely be celebrated in the local newspaper or TV news.



So what is the modern Mary Hare School? We have a thriving primary school with a language-rich environment meeting the needs of children who, in the main, are not making the expected progress in language that their audition would suggest. Mary Hare Primary pupils are immersed in language appropriate to their current levels and every experience, including lunch, play and sport, presents an opportunity for intensive, but natural, language exchanges.

The secondary school has a similar pupil ability profile to that of a comprehensive school but in different years might have slightly

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video FAQ section be added to the website with case studies on involvement, outcomes and problem-solving strategies.

We discussed the UK **Visible Classroom** project, currently under way in the Midlands, which enables professionals to analyse their teaching through captioning and transcripts. Although there had been some reservations about how transcripts might be used and the time needed for analysis, the process can be less threatening or disruptive than learning walks, and the self-evaluation by teachers can inform appraisals. The captioners felt that educational and professional development advantages offered by captioning were indisputable and would like to see an input on training courses to prepare new teachers for education for the future.

'**Simple English**', with ambiguities, colloquialisms and idioms removed from captions, has been developed and demonstrated. It is generally more appropriate for some autistic children rather than deaf or EAL learners, except in particular settings. It requires different skills from those for verbatim re-speaking and the captioners were enjoying exploring the implications for their roles.

Once again, it was a very interesting visit and provided yet more evidence of the potential applications of live captioning as an inclusion tool. Staff in Ai-Media's London office are happy to provide on-site or remote demonstrations: if you think it might be of interest for your setting, go to uk.ai-media.tv/

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different features. We always have a group who are broadly age appropriate or better linguistically. This is one reason that we reject the idea that deaf children 'need' the linguistic model of hearing peers. We have plenty of fine language models here. In any case, if the deaf child is not included, or the playground language is significantly in advance of the deaf child's, the benefit will be at best marginal.

Then, we will have a class whose members are likely to be 18 months to two years below their chronological age across a range of measures.

The Language Enrichment class members, who have a class Teaching Assistant and additional SLT, and have team teaching in English, are significantly delayed. Some may have come from a signing background; others will not have done.

Finally, having realised that we can be successful with a very wide range of young people, we set up a Language Enrichment Plus group for a small number of pupils in serious and urgent need of a highly structured intervention to try to rescue their English and give them a chance to express their true potential. This group is taught several subjects thematically by a class teacher. This approach will continue until we are sure that the group is ready to move on to a more conventional secondary education.

At the time of writing, we are in the middle of introducing a wider range of vocational courses in Key Stages 4 and 5 to ensure that we can meet the needs of all of our



young people as they get older.

However, Mary Hare retains overall an academic character, meeting the needs of bright deaf learners who might take the full English Bac at GCSE and choose from a very wide range of academic A Level courses as a stepping stone to higher education.

Mary Hare fees are often given as a reason for resisting placement, but often a real like-for-like analysis of the costs to the LA in local provision reveals the difference to be far smaller than might be initially thought. And because of the work of our Foundation, pupils from your authority will benefit from resources secured at no cost to the LA at all, like our Performing Arts Centre or new Year 11 study/accommodation block.

We would welcome colleagues visiting to catch up with pupils you may know or to see the school for yourselves. Look out for our next Professionals' Open Day on the 12th March. We are committed to continuing to be here and in good shape. I will work hard to do this as harmoniously as possible with colleagues across the country who work in other settings.

Peter Gale is the Principal of Mary Hare School.



Have you taken over a new post and would like to share your thoughts and aspirations? Contact the editor at magazine@batod.org.uk