



Meeting all Needs - Educational, emotional and social.

Harry is the eldest child of profoundly deaf parents, both of whom attended Mary Hare. He was born in Essex where he still lives. His mother is a music teacher and artistic director, his father works in the motor industry. He is a keen martial arts practitioner.

Harry uses both English and BSL. His primary education was within a mainstream hearing environment where he had some CSW support.

However, Harry has had (and continues) to have a huge amount of family support both with his interests and schoolwork. His interests range from playing Minecraft, reading, to taking part in martial arts, and playing the violin and piano. In terms of schoolwork, he particularly loves history and science and it is true to say that we have learned a lot of facts from him!

Why did you feel Mary Hare was the right place for Harry?

When Harry was just into Year 6, we commissioned an independent assessment and report from the Burwood Centre. Despite Harry having very good foundations academically, the report highlighted and confirmed what we knew already. Harry was struggling in a mainstream environment - especially where his emotional and social development was concerned.

The other key issue we had to consider was his access to secondary education.

He is more than profoundly deaf in the right ear and has severe/moderate hearing levels in the left ear.

The complex nature of Harry's hearing levels means there is considerable variation. The 70-decibel loss (the low frequencies) rises steadily to the category of a mild/moderate hearing range for the higher frequencies. This means that in his natural 'good' ear, he struggles to hear low sounds, such as men's voices. He also has difficulty with localising sounds too.

KEY FACTS

Name: Harry

- Current Year 7
- Joined Mary Hare in 2020
- First language, English and BSL (bilingual)
- Slight degree of visual impairment
- Ci/hearing aids/Phonak bi-crocs hearing aids



The care team worked hard helping him settle and forge friendships and the home-link has been a great help. Harry enjoys swimming twice a week and has made some great friends already.



In order to best address these unique hearing levels, Harry wears Phonak Bi-Crocs. With these, the right hearing aid does not give him any sound input because he has no residual hearing in that ear. The hearing aid serves instead as a device to pick up sounds and pass them over to the left ear, giving him a universal coverage of the sounds around.

His radio aid is therefore different from most. He uses the Soundfield system. This worked very well in primary school as he stayed in one classroom.

However, it would not only be financially prohibitive but a feat of engineering to install the unique system throughout the numerous mainstream classrooms used at secondary level. Lipreading at a distance with larger numbers of pupils would also have been impossibly daunting and draining. The difficulties of lipreading are further compounded by his slight vision impairment.

The plan for his mainstream education support was to have a CSW in place but this is not required. He is more than able to learn directly from subject teachers.

For all the above reasons, Mary Hare was the obvious solution - it is a much smaller environment with specialist provision which would meet all Harry's needs - educational, emotional, and social.

How easy was the process with your Local Authority to get Mary Hare named for Harry?

It wasn't easy. It was not until about 7 weeks after the other Primary school parents were informed about their secondary school allocation that we were advised of Harry's placement. This was to be at a local mainstream school with a deaf unit.

The process of applying to the Tribunal then began.

How much support did you get prior to the Tribunal?

I was extremely fortunate to be put in contact with KC at Mary Hare - a Family Liaison Officer who supported me with all the paperwork and the initial stages of going through the tribunal process. This was an incredibly tough time for me because of the isolation imposed by the pandemic. It meant I was not able to see my family for real face to face support. Consequently, both the application support and emotional support I received through the Liaison service were invaluable.

I also received considerable practical advice via video calls from some very special Deaf friends who are themselves, Teachers of the Deaf.

I was advised to contact the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) legal department who put me in touch with two legal representatives from Fieldfisher, (London based) who offered to help me with the case. They were incredibly professional and acted as mediator between myself, Mary Hare, the Tribunal panel, and the Local Authority.

Can you tell us a bit more about why you were prepared to go to Tribunal.

The tribunal was all about Harry. As a young man with a huge thirst for subjects and learning he has a lot to offer, given the opportunity and the right environment.

We identified many of the shortfalls of the local mainstream school and felt that we had a strong case. We also had enough evidence and paperwork from medical and working professionals over the years to support our case and go forward.

Harry is a talented musician. How is Mary Hare catering for this?

Harry has been playing the violin and piano for a few years and weekly lessons were immediately put in place for him and he was able to start on some interesting pieces. While the lockdown was in place he was doing 1-2-1 lessons online, and has been sent some boogie woogie pieces to play as well as some classical music. It is nice seeing him play these at home and when the pandemic is over, I know the school band will be set up for the pupils to enjoy playing together once again.

How easy has it been for Harry to settle into boarding life?

He was a month late in starting school because of having to wait for the outcome of the tribunal, but the school was ready and welcomed him straight away. He finds school work very interesting and enjoys the fact that there is always something to do in the evenings. The care team worked hard helping him settle and forge friendships and the home-link has been a great help. Harry enjoys swimming twice a week and has made some great friends already.

What has been his greatest achievement so far?

We are very proud of Harry for always giving it 'his all'. He loves reading books, writing stories, playing music and chatting to people. He has entered some piano and violin competitions in the past and has even won a trophy! Harry also has nine belts in Karate and will probably do a few moves if you are not careful...

Would you like to add anything else?

I have to say that I am very impressed with the provision of Mary Hare online learning during lockdown. Harry is always ready for virtual school and is able to get on with live classroom sessions, chat with friends, do his school work and upload it to be marked etc. I have noticed such a difference in him since he started at Mary Hare - he is noticeably calmer and more organised generally. I think he is starting to feel more supported and understood.

The tribunal days may be long gone, and we got there in the end - despite it being a very tough and emotionally challenging time. It is looking to be all worth it. The school speaks for itself.



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Securing the future of deaf children and young people