

Cued Speech in Manchester Schools

Teachers of the Deaf Tina Kirwin and Alison Paton were invited to give a workshop about Cued Speech at the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) Conference on 8th March 2008 and to submit an article detailing the workshop for the BATOD magazine.

The following is based on the article first published in the May edition of the BATOD magazine

We are teachers of the Deaf who have worked for the Manchester Service since the early 1990s. We have taught a wide variety of children of differing ages and abilities, but the majority of children have been profoundly deaf and with English as an additional language. Many have also arrived in Manchester only having had limited access to education and without access to hearing aids.

Anne Worsfold (Executive Director Cued Speech Association) was invited by Tina to give a talk to our Service in 2004. Anne spoke to our service about her own two profoundly deaf sons who had been introduced to Cued Speech at a very early age and had consequently both been able to read before they began school. Inspiring! Also research shows that deaf children who have been brought up using Cued Speech can attain age appropriate levels in literacy. Since then Tina has been unstinting in her efforts to enable as many children, parents and staff in Manchester as possible to learn and to use Cued Speech.

Anne was invited to deliver Cued Speech training to several of our staff and parents which she did with June Dixon-Millar in the summer term of 2004. Since then we have attended Cued Speech Summer Schools in Exeter and the Cued Speech Association have also kindly held refresher/update courses for our staff, parents and children. A cueing club for staff and parents has also been ongoing since that time. Cued Speech is now used as part of our communication programme from pre-school children through to secondary.

We find it gives profoundly deaf children access to phonics which they would not have through audition/lipreading alone and that it can enable signing children to extend their vocabulary when there may not be a specific sign for the word – eg – the names of different flowers rather than using the generic sign for flower followed by the fingerspelt name of the flower. We also find that many children become more relaxed and confident when introduced to Cued Speech as it takes away much of the stress of lip reading and provides a very structured and simple gateway to what can be a puzzling maze of spoken language (in particular to children whose home language is not English).

At the BATOD workshop we showed a DVD from the Cued Speech Association which gives first hand accounts from parents of deaf children and young people brought up with Cued Speech. Cuers contribute an overview of Cued Speech and why it works. Quotes from the DVD included: *“I know that without Cued Speech I would never have understood the English language. I can only hear a few sounds such as vowel sounds but Cued Speech makes me aware of all the sounds I can't hear.”* (Profoundly Deaf 17 year old).

We also showed a DVD of children from our service – from reception through to secondary age – using Cued Speech. None of the children have English as their home language. It shows children using the system to identify initial letter sounds, to facilitate their segmentation of phonemes to assist spelling and to enable lipreading of very similar looking numbers - eg six, sixteen, sixty.

Workshop participants also played a game in which they had to lipread various short words which contained the /ue/ sound; first without and then with Cued Speech to demonstrate the effectiveness of Cued Speech in improving lip reading ability.

Those attending the workshop also sang *Old MacDonald* - with signs - but cueing the animal sounds (which cannot really be signed and are lovely for introducing the sounds to profoundly deaf pre-schoolers). They also cued the *ee i ee i o* bit - partly to show how we use sign alongside Cued Speech but also to show how easy it can be to start using Cued Speech with deaf children !

We demonstrated how Cued Speech can visually reinforce rhyming in a way that lip reading and BSL cannot by signing and cueing simultaneously a simple rhyming story. This also showed how we are using Cued Speech alongside BSL. (continued opposite)