

Friday 23rd September 2022.

Dear *parent/carer*,

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Dr. Catherine Walker and I am the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCo) and Qualified Teacher of the Deaf at St. Vincent's School.

This term St. Vincent's School have been invited to be part of an exciting research project. The information gathered from parents and the pupils at St. Vincent's School who are eligible to participate, as well as other schools across the UK, will help the NHS make hearing assessments easier to access for children and young people with sensory and / or other learning needs.

I have been part of a working group for several months developing resources and approaches, but as part of the project the team would like to gather your feedback and ideas as well as those of your son / daughter. One unique element St. Vincent's School will provide the research team is providing information in braille, however there will be feedback forms to allow you to also consider how hearing screening and tests can become less daunting and accessible.

I am working with two colleagues in school to complete the checks; Mrs. Cathy Wynne (School Health Care Coordinator) and Mr. Lee Green (Head of PE). We have participated in training sessions associated with the equipment used to gather the information and how to send information to the research team. We are also working closely with an Audiologist from Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Ms Elizabeth Fleming who has participated in the training sessions and who will be a link when we complete the checks.

In this information pack there are 4 sections:

Section 1 (page 3) – brief overview of the work and aims of the project

Section 2 (page 4) – Consent forms

Section 3 (pages 5-8) – Frequently Asked Questions

We will send the information out to all parents/ carers, however some of our pupils will not be eligible to take part:

- If they already have a known hearing loss,
- They are under the care of audiology or ENT or
- If they have a programmable programmable ventriculo- peritoneal (PVP) shunt.

The information pack is for you to keep, we just need the 'Consent Form' (Section 2 – page 4) back on **Monday 26th September.**

We will be collating all the responses and Mrs. Wynne, Mr. Green and myself will aim to complete the checks with Elizabeth Flemming (Audiologist – Alder Hey) week beginning **10th October.**

If you have any questions / queries at all please feel free to email me catherinew@stvin.com . I will answer any questions or arrange to call you to discuss the checks that are part of the project.

I am very excited about this project as I feel the results could help the NHS make hearing checks less daunting and more reliable. We have been selected to participate so hope you are able to support our involvement.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Walker

Dr. Catherine Walker
SENDCo / Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD)

Section 1**Overview / Aims of the project****NHSE Guidance on the Hearing Check Project for Children and Young People in Residential Special Schools and Colleges**

We are writing to invite your child to participate in a new NHS project which is taking place in **St. Vincent's School**.

The Sensory Project is working to improve access to hearing checks for all children and young people who go to a residential special school. We are looking at the best way to check children and young people's hearing in this setting as we are aware of the importance of hearing for learning and communication, as well as for accessing sounds in the environment.

The quick and simple hearing checks will be undertaken by a familiar trained person in your child's school, and we would very much like your child to take part.

Please find information attached, that may answer some frequently asked questions.

You will, of course, be informed of the outcome of the hearing check. If we do not have a clear response from the hearing check of your child's ears, we will be in touch about a referral through your GP or local clinic to double check any results.

If you need more information or if there is anything that you consider we should know about your child in relation to the hearing checks, please do contact: Email catherinew@stvin.com

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

Catherine Walker

Dr. Catherine Walker
SENDCo / Qualified Teacher of the Deaf (QToD)

Section 2

Consent Form

Please tick the boxes that relate to your views / consent. Add the name of your son/daughter and sign the form.

Please return the form to school by **Monday 26th September 2022**.

I consent to my child having their ears checked and the results being shared for peer review with specialist audiologists.

I consent to the NHS England and the Health Innovation Network collecting anonymised information about my child and their ear check to support the NHS to understand the best way to deliver hearing checks in residential special schools

I consent to being contacted by the NHS project team to understand my views of the project

I do not wish my child to take part in this project

My child has a known hearing loss, is under the care of audiology or ENT or has a programmable programmable ventriculo- peritoneal (PVP) shunt and is therefore not eligible to take part in this programme.

Child/Young Person Name:

DoB:

Parent/Carer Signature:

Today's Date:

Section 3**Frequently asked Questions****Some questions you may have?****1. Why are you doing these hearing checks now?****Hearing Check Project for Children and Young People in Residential Special Schools and Colleges**

The NHS Long Term Plan sets out the ambitions for the NHS in England and aims to improve children's health by making sure they get the right health checks at the right time. This includes hearing, site and dental checks. The overview and summary of the Plan is here:

<https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/online-version/overview-and-summary/>

Healthy ears are important and changes to hearing can develop after birth. We want to be sure that no child or young person are missed. Information about the project is here: <https://www.seeability.org/resources/parents-guide-hearing-care?IDMF=bb2fa0cc-bf7f-4a33-aca3-7c8bc9e1c82d>

2. What is involved in a Hearing Check?

Three checks may be used to assess the health of your child's ear. The checks are safe, simple and easy to do, and the results are reliable.

1. **Otoacoustic emissions (OAE)** Measures the response of the ear to sound. In the test a soft foam or rubber tip is placed in your child's ear. Your child's ears response to soft sounds will be automatically measured. This is similar to how new born babies hearing is checked
2. **Otoscopy:** this is a way that we can look into the ear. It gives a view of the ear canal and eardrum and helps us to see if there are any problems that might affect hearing. In some cases a picture may be taken and sent to a specialist to review.
3. **Tympanometry (pressure test):** this check looks at how well the eardrum is moving. The eardrum needs to be flexible to allow sound to pass through it. Sometimes children's ears can get blocked, which stops the ear drum moving freely and which may impact their hearing.

At all times your child will be comfortable. There is no need for your child to make any active response during the checks. Any over-sensitivity to sensory input will be considered.

The aim of these checks is to provide an overall picture of the health of your child or young person's ear.

The results will be checked by specialist audiologists

3. Some children and young people will not be eligible for the hearing check project.

Children who have a known hearing loss, or are under the care of audiology or ENT, on a regular follow up pathway will not be eligible for the project. If you feel their hearing has changed, please follow up with the audiology or ENT department who is responsible for their care.

Children and young people who have a programmable ventriculo-peritoneal (PVP) shunt, cannot undergo hearing screening as part of this project- if there is concern about their hearing then you should ask your GP to refer your child or young person to audiology directly.

4. Who are the Health Innovation Network?

The Health Innovation Network (HIN) is one of 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) across England. AHSNs were established to connect NHS and academic organisations, local authorities, the third sector and industry to increase the spread and adoption of innovation across large populations, at pace and scale. We are hosted by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and are the evaluation partner for the Hearing Check Project pilot

5. How are our views taken into account during the test and afterwards?

Any treatment and care that is provided as part of this process will take into account the needs and preferences of you and your child or young person. You will be involved in any decisions, in partnership with the professionals who are treating your child. It is helpful for us to have any information you think is relevant to your child's circumstances. This includes meeting the communication needs and preference of your child. We know that checking for healthy ears in children with autism and learning difficulties can be complex. This will be taken into account in the way the check is done.

6. What is known about hearing in children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities?

It has been estimated that around one in three people with a learning disability may also have difficulties with hearing or vision at some time. This makes it important to check hearing and vision. Healthy ears and good hearing are important for speech and language development, two-way communication and access to learning.

7. Why check our child's hearing now?

Changes to hearing can develop after birth and these may not be picked up without a hearing check. Some young people, born before 2006 or who were not born in England, may not have accessed hearing screening at birth. We want to be sure that no children and young people are missed.

8. What happens if the hearing check result for my child does not give a clear response?

There are a number of reasons why a hearing check may not give a clear response. It may be that your child did not feel well that day. They may also have had a temporary hearing problem caused by a cold or a build-up of wax.

Further hearing checks, to give a more complete picture, usually take place in a clinic. This could be with an audiologist, ear doctor or paediatrician. If this is the case, the person who has done the hearing check in school may ask you to speak to your GP to do this. Your follow up letter from school will explain the next steps.

These further checks may be a repeat of the checks performed at school, but in a clinical setting. They might also include other checks which are right for your child. These will be discussed with you by the healthcare team responsible for your child or young person's care.

9. What happens if we are unable to check my child's hearing?

If for some reason the check is not able to be completed during the pilot project, then the project team will attempt to refamiliarise, desensitise or try a different approach for your child or young person. For some children and young people, the check may not be able to be completed; in this instance, if there is no concern about their hearing, then they will not be referred for additional testing. If there is concern, and the check cannot be completed at school, then as with any child or young person where there is concern about their hearing, they should be referred for further assessment.

10. What support and follow up can my family expect?

You will receive a letter after the hearing check which will let you know that your child's ears are healthy or whether they might need checking again.

After the follow up check you and your child will receive information and advice from specialist health and education professionals, should it be required.

11. How will we be consulted if further treatment or intervention is needed?

If treatment is necessary, you will, at that time, be given the opportunity to discuss the different options. You can ask any questions you want to and can always change your mind. Your own preference for a particular treatment is also important and should be discussed with the healthcare professionals treating your child, educational audiologist from the hospital or local authority sensory impairment support service or specialist teachers if they are involved.

Your child's treatment and care, and the information you are given about it, should take account of any religious, ethnic or cultural needs your family may have. It should also take into account any additional factors, such as physical or learning disabilities, sight or hearing problems.

12. Other sources of help

The leading charity for deaf children is The National Deaf Children's Society. Their information and resources can be found at www.ndcs.org.uk

All local authorities (LA) in England must produce a 'Local Offer' giving details of local services (including education, health and social care) that they expect to be available to children and young people aged 0–25 with SEND. Your Local Offer will be on, or linked to from, the website of your LA. If you type the name of your local authority and the words 'Local Offer' into a search engine it will usually find the website. If you're not sure who your local authority is, you can find out here: www.gov.uk/find-local-council