

Education system failing deaf children, research shows

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The British education system is neglecting the needs of deaf children, many of whom have major reading difficulties, according to new research led by academics from City University London and funded by the Nuffield Foundation.

Over half of the [deaf children](#) assessed had reading difficulties that were at least as severe as the problems faced by hearing children with [dyslexia](#) and in some cases they were more severe.

However, unlike for hearing children with dyslexia, there are no specific reading interventions routinely offered to support their reading, meaning they are unnecessarily falling behind their peers.

The study, one for the largest of its kind, examined two groups of children aged 10-11: deaf children that communicate orally (as opposed to using sign language), known as oral deaf, and hearing children with dyslexia. In all, seventy nine children with a severe-profound level of deafness took part in the study, representing a significant proportion of oral deaf children in the UK at this age.

Because of their [hearing loss](#), deaf children have difficulty hearing the speech sounds that make spoken language (i.e. phonology), upon which reading is based.

Dr Herman, said: "Our research has established this it is possible to use reading and dyslexia-sensitive tests developed for [hearing children](#)

successfully with oral deaf children. A small number of the poor deaf readers have underlying deficits comparable to dyslexia, but too many deaf children continue to fail at reading. Poor reading is not an inevitable outcome for every deaf child. With a proper understanding of their reading deficits and appropriate support, the outlook for deaf children in the UK can change."

Josh Hillman, Director of Education at the Nuffield Foundation, said: "This evidence reveals the extent to which the education system is currently failing to address the needs of deaf children with [reading difficulties](#). However, on a more positive note, it also demonstrates that it is possible to identify and address those difficulties at an early stage. We now need to see specialist reading interventions for deaf children who communicate using spoken language, to ensure they receive the equivalent support to their hearing classmates."

The research was covered on bbc.co.uk's education pages in an article by Patrick Howse.

More information: The complete study is available online: [www.city.ac.uk/ data/assets/p ... version-feb-2014.pdf](http://www.city.ac.uk/data/assets/p...version-feb-2014.pdf)

Provided by City University London

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