



## Specialist Teaching Service (Sensory Support Team) Recommendations for SEND Adaptations

SEND and Acoustic audits detail how settings can make the learning environment safe and accessible for deaf, vision impaired and multi sensory impaired CYP. For most of our students, general recommendations on their annual report from the QToD, QTVI or QTMSI will be all that is needed. For higher need CYP then the Habilitation Specialist or Educational Audiologist will visit the setting and carry out a more detailed audit. Most adaptations are low cost and settings are responsible for ensuring work is completed and appropriately maintained.

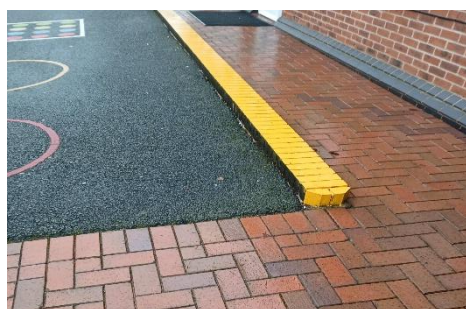
### SEND Adaptations Recommendations (VI)

The Habilitation Specialist will look at the inside and outside environment. They will identify potential hazards and suggest ways to reduce risk. Here are some examples of typical risks in settings that might be identified in a SEN adaptations audit.

#### Outside Areas



Picture 1 left – this low dip could be a trip hazard so needs to be colour contrasted with yellow paint (or colour that stands out well) to highlight the edges.



Picture 2 left – the slope has been redone and contrasting paint to make it stand out, reducing risk.



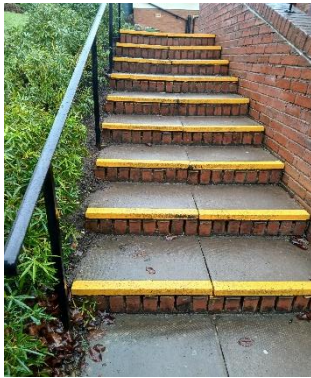
Picture 3 left – the raised edges around this tree need to be colour contrasted to that they visually stand out.



Picture 4 – this drain has been highlighted to reduce the risk of tripping.



Pictures 5 and 6 above – these stairs need the step nosing/edges to be colour contrasted so that they stand out from the tread. Usual colours used are yellow or white. However, as long as there is a very clear visual contrast, it can be the colour of the setting's choice.



Picture 7 left – the stairs have been highlighted and now offer good contrast.



Picture 8 – doorsteps need to be marked up with a colour that contrasts easily with the tread. Doorstep edges/nosing to all buildings need to be colour contrasted in hard wearing paint.

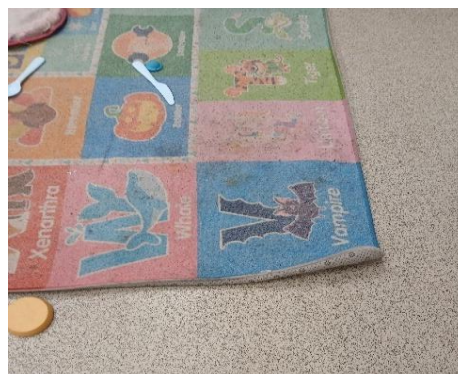
## Inside Areas



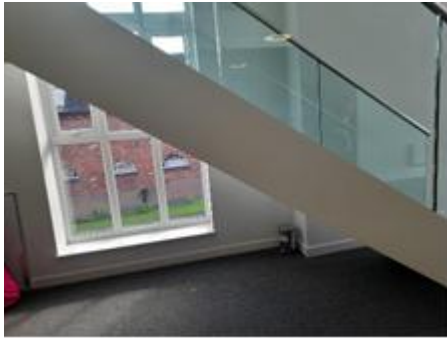
Pictures 1 and 2 above - the stairs need a handrail on both sides. This is necessary for all stairs used by students. They need edges marked in a contrasting colour.



Picture 3 left – example of contrast to the stair edges which offer a visual clue.



Pictures 4 and 5 above- Mats and rugs can provide additional and helpful locational clues. However, they can also present a hazard to children with limited or no vision, as upturned edges can become trip hazards. Ensure they are flush to the floor and have weighted or fixed edges or remove to reduce the risk.



Picture 6 left – this overhanging stairway is a hazard and could lead to head bumps. It needs highlighting in a contrasting colour so it stands out from the background.



Picture 7 left – broken slatted blinds can let glare in which causes physical discomfort for some CYP as well as making it harder to see the board or desktop resources.

## **General Recommendations for CYP with VI or MSI**

Set out below are general recommendations and advice to support the inclusion, safety, and access of CYP with a vision impairment. This is in addition to any specific advice provided in the SEN adaptations audit.

### **Steps and stairs inside and out**

- Stairwells, corridors, toilets and cloakrooms to be well lit at all times.
- Presence of all steps and stairs to be clearly indicated at top and bottom with tactile flooring. Also, on half-landings.
- Outside steps - nosing (step edges) to be painted in contrasting colour (white or yellow).
- Inside steps - fitted with contrasting nosing edges or painted depending on materials.
- Handrails to be fitted to both sides of all steps and stairs, and to extend beyond first and last step. Handrails should also run along half-landings
- Paint or tape highlighting will wear off over time. This needs to be regularly checked and reapplied as necessary.

### **Furniture and Fixings**

- Furniture/equipment left out in an unusual place/position is a hazard. Keep floors clear as much as possible.
- Consider colour contrast when purchasing new furniture/fixings – don't buy blue chairs that will be placed on a blue floor for example. When replacing door handles, buy a contrasting colour.

- Door and cupboard handles, sinks/basins, sanitary ware, light switches, hooks and pegs, furniture etc. should all be a good colour contrast to their background.
- Cloakrooms and corridors need to be kept tidy as much as possible. Bags left on the floor are a trip hazard.
- Consistent signage to all rooms: either to the left or right of doors at consistent height (not *on* doors)
- Cupboards containing equipment for students in Science, Food Tech etc. to have Braille/ large print labels fitted.
- Loose floor mats to be avoided but where unavoidable make sure the edges are not curling and so a trip hazard.
- Check recessed mats fit properly and are not worn.
- Fitted vision panels to doors are not to be obstructed by posters, notices, etc.
- Keep all cupboard and locker doors firmly closed.
- Thresholds to be flush with the floor wherever possible to avoid trip hazard

### **Lighting and Shade**

- Blinds/curtains may be needed at windows.
- Polished floors, shine from whiteboards, glass-fronted cabinets, laminated displays, smooth table tops etc. can cause visual discomfort.
- Task lighting may be needed, is it available?
- Steps, stairs and corridors should be well lit.
- Are lights silent and in good working order (not flickering and all bulbs working?).
- Do not teach with your back to a window as pupil will not see facial expressions and this is visually uncomfortable.
- Pools of sunlight/reflection of overhead lighting on a shiny floor can give the impression of holes, puddles etc. so consider the lighting, blinds, curtains.

### **Outside**

- Paths to be kept clear of leaves and moss.
- Clearly defined edges between grass and paved areas.
- Overhanging plants, trees and shrubbery to be cut back from walkways.
- Consider sensory planting as this will help with orientation as would wind chimes and water features.
- Shady areas for hot weather.

## Acoustic Audit Recommendations (Deaf CYP)



Picture 1 left - Soft materials can improve acoustics and sound absorption. Hanging curtains on the windows may help with this.

Picture 2 below- High ceilings and no soft furnishings add to the reverberation of sound. Adding acoustic panels to the walls and ceiling will help to dampen bouncing of sound.



Picture 3 & 4 below -examples of acoustic dots and ceiling panels



Picture 5 below- An abundance of hard surfaces add to the reverberation in a room-



Picture 6 below - Open plan environments-have serious drawbacks acoustically. Partial-height partitions or moveable partitions eliminate visual distractions, they provide very little noise reductions between classrooms.



### **General Advice to support Deaf CYP access to learning environments**

Set out below are general recommendations and advice to support the inclusion, safety, and access of deaf CYP. This is in addition to any specific advice provided in the SEN adaptations audit.

#### **Absorbing Sound:**

High ceilings and open plan classrooms can cause more difficulties than lower ceilings and defined spaces.

Fit blinds or curtains to the windows.

Plants- plants around the room can help absorb sounds.

Fit acoustic panels/dots to walls and ceilings to absorb sound and reduce reverberation.

Line trays and pen pots/containers with material such as felt. Add felt pads to the bottom of pen containers to reduce the clattering noise against desks.

Soften the surface of large cupboard doors- e.g; add 'soft' displays, felt panels, acoustic dots, or display boards.

Use carpets, rugs, curtains, or soft furnishings in the room in as many areas as possible.

Hang artwork or coverings on walls.

Use hessian or felt to back display boards, rather than shiny paper. Don't fully cover the felt layer in display paper- the 'soft' surface area should be greater than any 'hard' paper items pinned to them.

Cover cupboard top hard surfaces (e.g., small cupboard tops) with cloth, to reduce reverberation and increase the sound absorbing area of the classroom (where possible and practical).

#### **Reducing Noise Sources:**

Turn off noisy equipment (projectors, heaters) when not in use.

Activity Noise- provide covering/mats for tables when noisy equipment is used, to reduce clattering and impact noise eg pupils throw dice into a felt lined tray, source some noiseless counters.

Close doors and windows to block outside noise.

Use quiet-close doors and sound insulation.

In the canteen, add padding to cutlery stations – a napkin underneath is enough to dampen the noise.

Place soft tips on the bottom of chairs and tables.

Line the inside of pencil pots with felt or cotton wool. This will reduce pencil clatter noise.

Add felt or foam to the bottom of the pots to reduce the scraping noise on the tabletop.

Minimise hard surfaces: Reduce the number of hard surfaces that reflect sound, such as metal and glass. Cover tables with cloths and other surfaces with rugs, fabric or blinds.

Heating systems (radiators) - service regularly to ensure they run as quietly as possible.

Repair if the radiator/heating system develops intermittent noises in the classroom.

### **Optimising Layout:**

Close windows and doors: Ensure windows and doors are closed to prevent outside noise from entering the classroom.

Angle furniture away from walls to diffuse sound.

Use bookshelves as sound barriers. The bookshelf, books, and magazines have mass which helps to absorb sound, resist vibration, and reduce sound transmission. Getting a bookcase that extends from the floor all the way up to the ceiling makes an even bigger difference.

Sound absorbs better with tables arranged together rather than in rows.

Ensure rooms are well lit without glare.

Use Sound-Field Systems – these will evenly distribute the teacher’s voice throughout the classroom.

## Accessible Environments Self Audit Tool

General things to consider which will impact on the ability of Deaf, VI and  
MSI pupils to able to access the learning environment

Score a positive or a negative for the questions below to see how  
accessible your setting might be

	+	-
Are all areas well lit, without glare		
Are floors firm, even and level		
Are there warning for changes of levels e.g. ramps/tape		
Are blinds or curtains fitted to windows		
Do steps and stairs have handrails		
Is there colour contrast between the décor, furniture and flooring		
Are there any soft furnishings		
Do tables have coverings on them in a plain, matt fabric		
Are windows double or triple glazed		
Do you ensure doors are either fully open or closed		
Are doors well fitted with visible handles		
Do pupil workstations and cutlery drawers have padding		
Are signs clear with good contrast		
Are there pictures and wall hangings		
Are your display boards backed with hessian or non-shiny paper		
Are all public spaces such as toilets signposted in an accessible way		
Are all communal spaces free from obstacles		
Does the room have high ceilings (score as a negative if yes)		
Is the classroom open plan? (score a negative is yes)		
Are there quieter places to sit, away from noise and high traffic areas		
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		