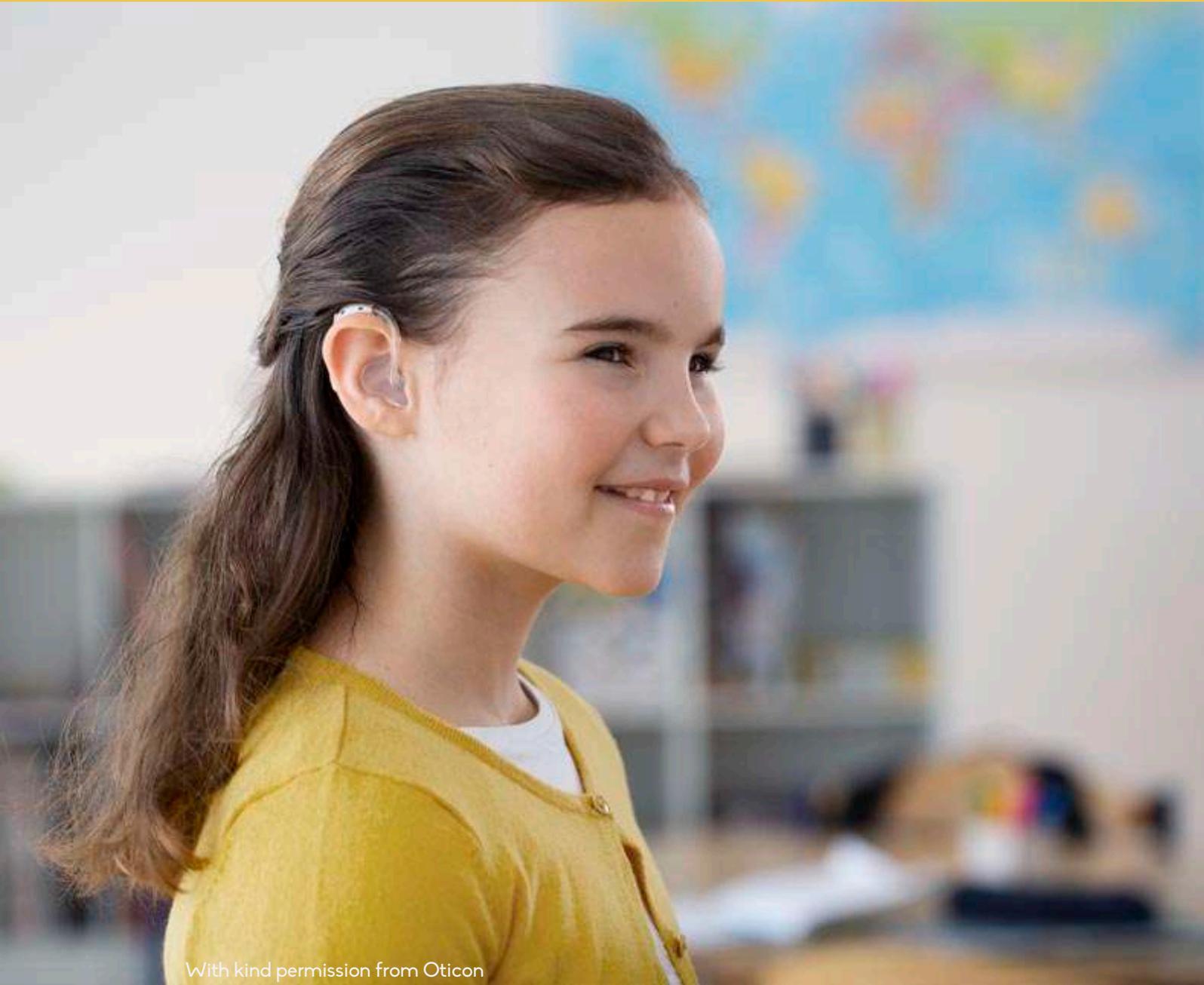


Listening to Learn

A guide for teachers supporting children with glue ear



With kind permission from Oticon

EWING FOUNDATION

Glue ear

Listening is important for **learning**. For some children however, listening can be hard work and tiring because of a hearing loss caused by a temporary condition, commonly known as glue ear.

A buildup of sticky fluid in the middle ear reduces how effectively the little middle ear bones transfer sound vibrations from the eardrum to the inner ear. It reduces the sound wave energy that travels through the middle ear. This can result in a mild to moderate hearing loss and speech sounds become muffled and unclear.

Glue ear is more common in the winter months and sometimes associated with coughs and colds. Children often grow out of glue ear and it is less likely to occur over the age of 8 years.



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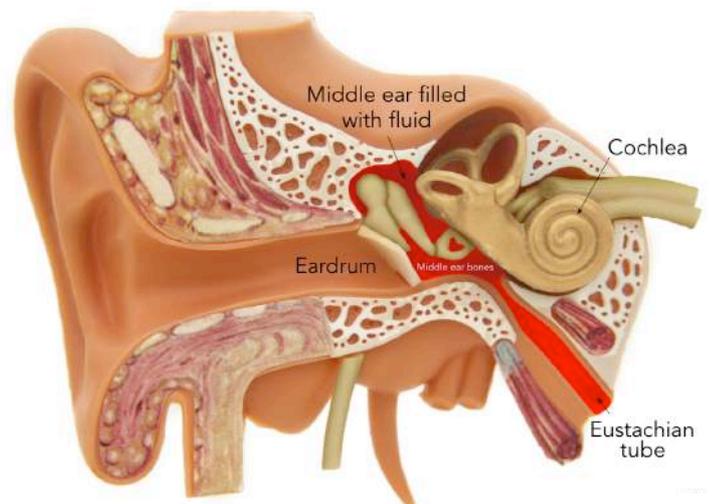
The middle ear contains three tiny bones (the ossicles), called the malleus (hammer), incus (anvil) and stapes (stirrup), which are the smallest bones in the body.

Interventions

Glue ear usually resolves without intervention, but when a hearing loss persists the following interventions may be considered:

- Monitoring and Support**
- Hearing aids**
- Grommets**
- Auto-inflation**

Find out from the family what you may need to do, to support these interventions in school.



Middle ear filled with fluid

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Symptoms

Symptoms often fall into these four areas.

- **Hearing:** may find it difficult to hear speech, mishear instructions, ask for repetition, want the volume turned up, not respond to their name when called.
- **Speech:** may be unclear, delayed or louder/quieter than normal.
- **Behaviour:** may become frustrated or withdrawn and prefer to play alone because they are not able to hear clearly. Listening will be hard work, so they may tire easily.
- **Attention:** find it difficult to concentrate and attend to speech, particularly in noise.

Top Tips for Teachers

Listening with glue ear is hard work. Speech sounds muffled and unclear and can lead to misunderstanding and frustration. Your pupil may find it hard to concentrate, be easily distracted and find listening very tiring.

Here are some very simple steps that you can take that will make a real difference and help your pupil to **listen and learn**.



Teacher checking understanding with pupil.

Take time to check that your pupil with a hearing loss has understood the lesson, so that they can successfully complete their independent work.

A Attention

It is important to get your pupil's attention before starting to talk to them.

B Background noise

Listening in background noise will be difficult. Take the simple steps on page 3 to reduce background noise.

C Clear speech and get closer

Get closer and speak clearly, avoid speaking from a distance and shouting. Ensure that your pupil is seated at the front closest to you.

D Discuss

Discuss with your pupil what helps them to listen and what they are finding difficult.

E Encourage

Encourage your pupil by giving extra clues and repeating instructions. Use gestures, signing, pictures or visual aids to reinforce communication as needed.

F Face to face

Make sure your face can be clearly seen as lip reading will make it easier to understand speech. Be careful not to stand with your back to a window and make sure that light is on your face. If glasses are needed, ensure they are worn.

Create a calmer classroom

Reduce background noise and get closer

Classrooms are typically very busy and noisy environments and this can make it difficult for a pupil to listen and follow a lesson.

Background noise has a greater impact on children's speech perception and listening comprehension than adults, with high levels of noise affecting a pupil's progress.¹ Children are not able to make sense of the words that they have missed, as their brain's auditory network is not fully developed.²

Classrooms often have high ceilings, hard floors and lots of windows resulting in a challenging listening environment. Echoey rooms are noisy, making it harder to listen.

Softer surfaces are better than hard as they absorb sound

Taking the following steps to improve the listening environment will help your pupil to listen and learn.

- Reduce background noise and get closer.
- Softer surfaces are better than hard as they absorb sound.
- Close doors and windows where possible, to reduce external noise.
- Turn off unnecessary noisy equipment.
- Use carpets, rugs, bean bags, cushions, curtains and blinds to absorb sound, reducing echo.
- Wall displays help to absorb sound too.
- Use tablecloths and table coverings when using equipment on tabletops.
- Place foam in pen pots.
- Put felt pads on chair legs.
- Be aware of the level of noise in your classroom, asking pupils to stop talking when necessary.

¹ Klatte, M., Lachmann, T. and Meis, M. (2010) 'Effects of noise and reverberation on speech perception and listening comprehension of children and adults in a classroom-like setting.' *Speech Perception and Understanding* 12. pp. 270-82.



Wall displays, bean bags, carpets and blinds to reduce echo.

Very noisy and echoey classrooms ideally need acoustic improvement to make it easier to listen and hear speech clearly. Special acoustic panels can be placed on walls and ceilings to absorb sound, reduce echo and improve the listening environment.



Woolly Shepherd acoustic clouds

² Cole, E. B., Flexer, C. (2011) *Children with hearing loss, developing listening and talking*. San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.

EWING FOUNDATION for deaf children

Promoting inclusion and achievement for deaf children through listening and speaking

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With sincere thanks to Pella Erskine-Tulloch, an experienced paediatric audiologist who identified the need for this booklet.



Glue Ear Together

Glue Ear Together provides clear and concise information on the Glue Ear Together website.

www.glueeartogether.org.uk



'Hear Glue Ear' is an award-winning App that provides parents with advice about glue ear. It includes audiobooks, songs and listening games to help support speech and language and develop listening skills.

www.hearglueear.co.uk



HearGlueEar



Contact us

Ewing Foundation provides training, technological and educational support for the professionals who work with deaf children and young people. If we can help you, please contact us.

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