

## What if my Local Authority offers sign language support instead of Cued Speech?

Signs are never an alternative to Cued Speech because BSL, or non-language sign systems like Sign Supported English, are very different from Cued Speech with different aims and outcomes. BSL is a visual language which gives access to the deaf community; it does not have a written form and the grammar of BSL is very different to that of English. For example in BSL meanings can be added onto a single sign through (for example) direction, duration, facial expression, and body movement. These additions give a great deal of extra information, for example about what is happening, when, and how the narrator felt – and all in one sign – but this doesn't tie in at all with either spoken or written English, which may need a whole sentence to convey the same meaning. In schools deaf children STILL need to be able to understand and read and write that English sentence.

To attempt to solve this problem some schools use a system of 'Manually Coded English' such as Sign Supported English (SSE) where some BSL signs are used with additional signs which were devised to represent parts of English grammar. The balance of BSL signs to English varies greatly depending on the signer's knowledge of the two languages. A single sign is often differentiated into a number of English words by clearly mouthing the word, so, in order to comprehend SSE well, one needs good lip-reading (speechreading) skills, as well as a good knowledge of English grammar. SSE is not a language and it does not tie in with the sound-based elements of spoken English. As one professional said:

*"I can see that Manually Coded English was originally devised many years ago to try to solve the problem with literacy – but I can find no evidence that it leads good language skills in either BSL or English or age appropriate literacy, and I can't see why it continues to be used when a) it debases the language of BSL and b) Cued Speech gives compete access to the English language, which does lead to good literacy."*

Whether BSL or a non-language sign system is used there is no direct sound-based relationship between the sign and the written word as there is between speech (and Cued Speech) and the printed word. Many children supported at a mainstream school which uses BSL or a sign system will have a teacher who speaks English which is then interpreted into sign by an assistant. The child will then have to re-interpret back to written English and to do follow-up reading in English. They must learn to associate each and every written word individually with its sign. This is like going to an English school, having lessons translated into Chinese, then having to read and write in English.

On the other hand, Cued Speech is a visual mode of English. 'Cued English' and 'spoken English' are exactly the same, except 'cued English' is in a visual mode and 'spoken English' is oral/aural mode. Both lead equally into literacy. Both give full access to education. By definition signs can never be an **alternative** to English - but BSL and CS can work very well together to give access to both languages bilingually.

### Learn Cued Speech in about 20 hours

Parents and professionals can learn Cued Speech in various ways:

- One- or two-day Workshops
- Bespoke courses
- Free e-learning website at: [www.learntocue.co.uk](http://www.learntocue.co.uk)
- Our annual cueing weekend
- 'Skype' sessions for yourself or a small group. The first session is FREE.

**Training for professionals is low-cost and can be adapted to your needs.**

**Please enquire about our bursary fund for parents.**

Many school-age deaf children will benefit from Cued Speech use - for some it will be vital.

One parent, whose son had very little hearing even with hearing aids or implants, and whose son was supported by Cued Speech from when he started at a mainstream primary school, wrote:

*"As CS can be learned within a relatively short period of time, and since it is no problem to cue slowly with a young deaf child while building up speed through practice (they, after all, are subconsciously developing their receptive 'cue reading' skills at the same time as the person cueing to them may be perfecting their own cueing skills) it was very straightforward to recruit the inclusion / communication support worker who had the right temperament and commitment to supporting our son and then train her up in CS once she was in post. Within a few weeks, she was able to cue slowly to our son every word and phrase that the teacher or other children said, so long as everyone wasn't speaking at once. She could cue whole story books to him, all the separate sounds in phonics, and in group play situations or in the playground, she could to pick out and cue to him certain things that people said or 'cue over' the background noise in the classroom. The fact that he already had age-appropriate understanding of spoken English [through home use of Cued Speech] meant that he was able to keep pace with his hearing peers in every area of the curriculum, including maths, and in some areas, including reading, he began to overtake many of them."*

Name available on request.

Deaf children vary in their levels of exposure to spoken English and this naturally affects their own levels of understanding and use of the language. They also vary in their ability to use Hearing aids or implants and so the use of Cued Speech can be adapted to these different situations. Here are three typical scenarios for deaf children:

#### 1. Children who have full access to English through Cued Speech before school:

With early and consistent use of Cued Speech at home, deaf children – even with no hearing - can fully understand English, **and arrive at school with age-appropriate language.** They can use their knowledge of English phonemes (represented by Cued Speech) to learn to read using the same techniques as hearing children and have age-appropriate literacy. Even with little or no hearing they can use a Cued Speech Transliterator to fully access the language of the classroom.

#### 2. Deaf children who use English at home and may start to use Cued Speech at school age:

These children may still have some significant gaps in their understanding of English and need support to catch up and access the curriculum fully. The noisy environment of the classroom can also mean some children are not able to hear enough to learn effectively at school.

For these children, Cued Speech can build on their existing understanding and give them a really effective way to increase their vocabulary and understand the grammar of English. They can rely on the consistent visual information to keep learning even if the noise levels make it too difficult to hear. Also, because of the way Cued Speech represents each sound within each word, it perfectly matches the use of the phonics approach to literacy learning used in all English primary schools.

### For training and more information about the use of Cued Speech contact:

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The Forces, Forces Cross, Blackawton, Devon TQ9 7DJ  
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Email: [info@cuedspeech.co.uk](mailto:info@cuedspeech.co.uk)  
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[www.learntocue.co.uk](http://www.learntocue.co.uk)



### >> 3. Deaf children who arrive at school with very limited or no understanding of English, either spoken or written:

It may be that these children were expected to acquire English by listening but haven't, or that the aim was to use sign language as a first language, but that they have 'learnt some signs' which support basic communication rather than using BSL as a full language. Alternatively they may have been diagnosed late.

Children who have, for one reason or another, very poor English are at a serious disadvantage in relation to their peers because, from day one, the National Curriculum assumes a secure understanding of spoken language built on 4 to 5 years of using it socially at home. For these children Cued Speech can be used to represent full and fluent English at language level so they can begin to 'take in' and understand English and as a way to build a phonic awareness for literacy. It can also be used bilingually alongside BSL.

### Cued Speech Can be used:

#### To teach phonics

Cued Speech can be used very successfully to teach phonics, but if used for phonics alone will, obviously, not give access to the English language as a whole with all the advantages that brings.

#### For all deaf children

Deaf children who are familiar with the system on arrival in school, or who taught the system as older children, can use a trained professional (a Cued Speech Transliterator) all or most of the time to transliterate the speech of others to give full

access to the spoken language within a classroom, laboratory or sports field. CS may be used less over time as the child's needs change.

#### With the family

Hearing children learn most of their language in their homes from family members. Deaf children ideally need to do the same, so if hearing aids or implants are not enough for your deaf child to hear everything at home, or they can't hear anything at all, then Cued Speech at school alone is unlikely to close the 'language gap'. Use in both family and school will give the best opportunities for success.

#### What are the main advantages of using Cued Speech within a mainstream classroom?

Cued Speech:

- will allow a deaf child to see exactly the same language, at the same time as hearing children
- represents English sound-for-sound and therefore has a direct code relationship with both written and spoken language. All teaching takes place using the same language - it is only the mode of the language which changes
- is uniquely helpful for literacy because it represents the sounds of English
- has no limitations of vocabulary – once you know the system you can say anything!
- can be used with foreign languages
- can be used with technical vocabulary
- ties in directly with what the child hears through their implant or hearing aid
- will help with to lip-reading
- is quick to learn
- will allow new vocabulary to be accurately 'cue-read'; whereas it is almost impossible to accurately lipread new words because so many sounds are ambiguous.

#### How does CS work?

Put simply, when sounds look the same on the lips (as they are spoken) an accompanying handshape or position will make each lip-pattern look different. For example the sounds /p/ /b/ and /m/ sound quite different to hearing people, but they are indistinguishable by watching the lips. So people who rely on lip-reading alone have no way of distinguishing words such as baby and maybe or pay, bay and may. When you use CS each consonant sound has a different accompanying handshape so each sound now looks quite different. Vowel sounds with confusing lip-patterns are clarified by positions.

When people speak they join sounds to make words. Similarly, with Cued Speech the handshapes and positions are joined to clarify a word. CS sounds complicated but in practice it's quite easy; there are only 8 handshapes and 4 positions in total. Cued Speech was devised by Orin Cornett in 1966.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### What if my child's school doesn't use it?

Cued Speech can help all children who don't have full access to English through listening in their school. All children have a right to access education and if deaf children can't hear, or fully hear, parents can request that they have the support of someone who uses Cued Speech to give visual access to what the teacher, and other children, are saying. If deaf children need Cued Speech to access English then the Local Authority should support this and pay the costs of training. Because Cued Speech can be learnt in around 20 hours it is a) economic and b) gives support quickly. The Cued Speech Association UK can train both families and professionals in Cued Speech. Please contact us to talk about this.

#### Does my school-age child need Cued Speech?

Do you know if your child's understanding of English is the same as their hearing peers? If you don't know ask their teacher to test his/her understanding of English. Of course, late diagnosis or support will have an effect, and some deaf children will have additional needs, but once this is taken into account your child **should** have age-appropriate language if the communication method you are using is suitable. With Cued Speech deaf children can learn language at the same speed as hearing children; if your child is not doing this then find out how Cued Speech at home and /or at school can help.

#### Will the class teacher use Cued Speech?

In mainstream schools a specially trained learning support assistant will usually be the main staff member using Cued Speech, although it is helpful if the teacher learns too.

#### Can foreign languages be learned through Cued Speech?

Yes, Cued Speech has been adapted into approximately 60 languages and dialects. These adaptations can also help families with deaf

children whose first language is not English to communicate in their home language and English. There are a number of deaf children who have been brought up with two or more languages through CS.

#### Are there any limitations to using Cued Speech in school?

Very few! Deaf adults and children who use their eyes to 'listen' (either with signs or Cued Speech) do get tired and may need more breaks than hearing children who are listening. It is, however, much less tiring than trying to lip-read. Also, of course, the deaf child can't look simultaneously at an item the teacher is describing and at the Cued Speech Transliterator (CST), so some extra time or input will be necessary from time-to-time.

A continual use of a CST may limit the one-to-one contact that the deaf pupil will have with others (as will the use of a sign interpreter) and it is important to facilitate some direct communication. Almost all children brought up with Cued Speech use speech expressively (although their diction may be poor initially) and are good lip-readers, but Cued Speech does not teach diction. It is useful to have help from a Speech and Language Therapist, preferably one who uses Cued Speech.

#### Is Cued Speech used on its own?

Most children will use hearing aids or cochlear implants as well if they benefit from them. Speech therapy and, where necessary, intensive listening practice can also be helpful. Children with no hearing at all, and those being brought up bilingually, would normally have additional input in BSL.

