

Deaf Children's Social Inclusion in Mainstream School:  
A Case Study

Sue Hawkins

May 2008

The Westminster Institute of Education at Oxford Brookes University

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements governing  
the award of Master of Science in Educational Audiology

## ABSTRACT

As a result of recent Government policy, the majority of deaf pupils in the United Kingdom are now educated in their local mainstream school, alongside their hearing peers. Those who oppose this move, and the consequent closure of many special schools for the deaf, maintain that mainstreamed deaf pupils may suffer from social exclusion.

The aim of this case study was to investigate the level of social inclusion of four deaf children in a mainstream primary school, (two in Year 3 and two in Year 5), in order to identify the extent to which they have been accepted by their hearing peers. The study investigated the relationships that exist between deaf and hearing children in the school. It also identified communication difficulties and strategies used by the children to try to overcome these. All the pupils were asked to use a rating scale to score each pupil, in their year group, and then to specify three positive and three negative nominations related to the children they would choose to play, or work, with under certain circumstances. School staff, parents, and the deaf pupils themselves, were interviewed to ascertain their views on inclusion.

All the deaf pupils received a positive rating score indicating that they were not actively disliked, or deliberately excluded. However, three out of the four deaf pupils received a low social impact score and were categorised as being 'neglected', indicating that they tended to be left out of social interactions. None of these three had a mutual friend in the class. Eighty per cent of the hearing pupils indicated that they played with deaf pupils, while fifty per cent admitted to having some problems in communicating with their deaf peers.

Overall, the deaf pupils appeared to be liked by their hearing peers, and even played with, but communication difficulties seemed to have had a negative impact on the deaf pupils' social acceptance. Therefore, this research suggests that deaf pupils should be given more support and advice to enable them to communicate more effectively with their hearing peers.