First thoughts on our visit to Konya School for Hearing Impaired

NB: the cultural and political context (and our ignorance of it) may be significant and may reduce the value of some of the following observations. The following is offered from our experience, working within the English education system.

The English system is based around meeting the educational and social and emotional needs of the individual child, and does not have a prescriptive model of communication. In the English context teachers working with deaf children have made a career choice and receive extensive Masters level training in language acquisition and development, communication, audiology and the legislative framework. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it illegal to deny provision (within reason) on the basis of disability.

Strengths

Pupils

They are happy – confident, behave like normal kids

Behaviour and attitude to learning of pupils – desperate to learn, desire to communicate in any mode, confidence, good peer to peer communication outside lessons, very inclusive of each other (other disabilities)

Keen to peer assess, this could be capitalised on. Collaborative learning

We saw a range of abilities - some very bright children

Teachers

Warm relationships (in many cases) between teachers and pupils,

In one lesson in particular: good pace and inclusivity, understanding of children's needs, potential for effective sharing of best practice.

Commitment and passion of teachers – evidenced by attendance at meetings, involvement in this process, passionate participation in the seminar

Examples of good knowledge of pupils

Children feel secure, not overwhelmed

Another lesson: pupils taking responsibility for learning e.g. role playing teacher's role

Encouraging listening skills – interactive

Natural communication/conversation (Kindergarten), also good inclusion of physically disabled child with physical therapy built in to activity

Classroom management e.g. use of questioning, waiting to gain attention, use of child's name each time they are addressed, use of horseshoe with teacher at centre

Use of Teaching Assistants – when fully engaged, knowing what they were required to do

Use of encouragement and praise (high five, clapping, stars), showing good work by one pupil to the others

Learning Environment

Spacious rooms, with small classes

Attractive, colourful

False ceilings to reduce reverberation in primary school

Areas for development

Teachers

Children feel secure, but possible not being stretched

Use of Teaching Assistants

More care when talking about children

Consistent use of star system/reward/recognition

Talking/signing over soundtrack (that was too quiet)

Use of voice – some teachers are almost whispering

We feel there may be some undervaluing of children's attempts to speak

Learning Environment

Acoustics – reverberation and noise – open doors, hard surfaces, high ceilings, open windows

Display materials too high for children to see, accessibility of display materials (visually, cognitively)

Horseshoe closer to board/teacher

Consistent use of FM system

Further suggestions

Understanding of specific cognitive and linguistic abilities and levels of each child to allow for more targeted teaching and learning. Use of baselining and measuring progress – we didn't see evidence of this, it may be in place. If not, this could be a longer term development.

Use of video, pictures of children as they learn (pupils very interested in being filmed)

Well-equipped now – training crucial to enable best use of the technology

Celebration of pupil success, across class, and across school (special assemblies, more displays of pupil work)

Think about use of form groups?

Use of mini whiteboards

Learning objectives shared with pupils – give the big picture. Recap/review/evaluation at the end

Use of concrete materials, kinaesthetic learning experiences e.g. textures, plasticene, stones, sand, number lines, sentence rearranging/ grammar cards – make conceptual links, provide context

Interactive Whiteboards: use of attractive images (for free), hide/unhide sections of images/labels, dragging text or image objects to rearrange the order/sequencing (can be pre-prepared or done in real time). Don't assume that pre-prepared resources aimed at mainstream children are appropriate. Share materials, save. Use whiteboard for modelling perfect solution to sequencing exercises done at pupils' desks.

Games to develop auditory memory (ref. SaLT)

Engagement of families – send pictures home, create newsletters/graphic newsletters/blogging

Ask pupils for opinions, put things in their own words (where possible)

Teaching of ICT/computing as a curriculum subject and for use across the curriculum.

Key Findings

Sharing of best practice

All classrooms to use horseshoe, close to the board/teacher

Greater use of concrete examples to provide context and kinaesthetic reinforcement, and more visual support