

Mount View Facility Supporting Students with a Hearing Impairment

Mount View Facility for Students with Hearing Impairment

Welcomes New Families

We are pleased to welcome you to Mount View Primary School and to the Facility. We hope that you will find valuable information in these pages which will help you to become familiar with our programs. Please note that this information should be read in conjunction with Mount View curriculum outlines and other general information, which is given to new families.

History

Mount View Facility was established in 1994 by the Minister of Education to provide the best possible access to mainstream government primary education for families who choose spoken language for their child's communication development. Starting with just two students in a pilot project, the Facility has steadily grown and currently supports 36 students. Many families have relocated to be able to access Mount View. Students have enrolled from many areas of Victoria and other states.

Mount View School Vision:

This vision guides our school into the future.

People who are motivated, compassionate, life-long learners helping to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

Mount View School Mission:

This is the core purpose of Mount View Primary School Mount View Primary School provides challenging and engaging programs which promote inquiry and reflection to develop internationally minded citizens.

At Mount View Primary School the Deaf Facility staff undertake to provide:

- An oral and/or auditory-verbal educational program within an integrated setting for children with a moderate or greater than moderate sensori-neural hearing impairment.
- A program which maximises the use of residual hearing.
- Sufficient support to give these children equal access to the curriculum and to the school community.
- Students with the essential skills to thrive educationally and to challenge their capacity as learners.

Facility Daily Routines:

Daily listening check

Being able to listen well is critical to the success of each child's program. Please try to ensure that your child's hearing aids and/or speech processor and Roger digital radio system are connected and working properly before arriving at school. We will do a listening device check in either the Junior or Senior Facility between 8.30-8.50 am each school day. Children leave their school bags outside the Facility in the corridor and enter the room quietly while checks are being made. After checks are completed, they go outside to play until the school bell rings and then line up with all the other children. Parents are welcome to attend these checks, however if your child is confident in separating from you in the morning, we ask that you encourage him/her to come into the Facility by him/herself. This will reduce congestion and assist your child in developing independence.

- We check that a child's listening devices are working optimally. If a hearing device is not working, then staff/student will trouble shoot the problem, and in almost every case, be able to fix it. Faulty components, that can be repaired, are sent to Australian Hearing, Dandenong or the Cochlear Implant Clinic.
- At the end of the school day, your child takes his/her Roger transmitter home for re-charging.
- Each classroom has a sound field system and wall pilot which connects to each child's Roger receiver. This technology provides better access for the children and enables them to hear their teachers and their peers more clearly.
- For whole school assemblies in the Sports Centre/Outdoor Shelter, all children 'connect' their Roger receivers using the wall pilot as they walk in through the entrance. All students are expected to wear their Roger receivers for assembly.
- We encourage all children to keep a "**Spares Kit**" in their school bag for ready access. Kits should contain:
 - spare batteries (for hearing aids or speech processors)
 - gel (if needed)
 - puffer (if needed)

We only keep limited audiological supplies at school for emergencies.

An Overview of our Program

At Mount View we believe that children learn language most readily when they are actively engaged in relaxed, meaningful interactions with supportive parents, teachers and peers. A child's home environment continues to be crucial to his/her development of knowledge and understanding. At school, classmates with normal hearing, provide wonderful speech and language models. Incidental language, colloquial, and popular vernacular are among the many sources of input that are available to

children who are deaf or hard of hearing who are being educated in the mainstream. The inherent social, linguistic and academic advantages of a mainstream environment cannot be over emphasized.

Inclusion in a regular classroom however is only the first step. A child must have access to the curriculum that is being taught. Access will be enabled only if he or she can understand the language of the class teacher and peers. Literacy development is also highly dependent upon language. We can only read what we can understand. We can only write about things we can understand and talk about. Language development, therefore, is at the heart of our Facility program.

While the program is flexible to take into account the varying needs of our students, the Facility program is based on the principle of integration into mainstream classes for most of each school day with opportunities daily or several times per week for withdrawal into small tutorial rooms for intensive listening, speech, language and literacy programs. Teachers of the deaf, when not working in Facility tutorial rooms, team-teach in mainstream classes where children with a hearing impairment are enrolled. Students receive different levels of support because their needs are different. Support is differential and determined on level of need.

Facility teachers, class teachers and parents form a yearly partnership to provide for the needs of your child, and a daily timetable is planned so that individual sessions in the Facility will supplement and enhance the classroom program. Facility sessions concentrate on the continuing development of listening, language, speech, vocabulary and social skills while curriculum support will focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It is our expectation that each child will develop spoken language skills that will allow for full participation in society, where most people can hear and communicate orally.

Careful setting of individual termly goals will strengthen your child's overall ability to achieve success. We encourage input from our parents in the generation of these goals.

Individual or very small group Facility lessons provide students with lots of practice at selected objectives in a short, highly focussed amount of time. We move specific targets into conversation as quickly as possible, because language must be real and meaningful.

The Importance of Listening

Children who are born with normal hearing generally have very little difficulty acquiring spoken language. If children who are born with hearing impairment are to acquire spoken language, then it's essential to maximise their ability to learn to listen to the very best of their potential. This means providing them with the very best hearing aids, and /or implant, and Roger digital radio system. It also means teaching children how to listen, and we do this at Mount View through a planned program which is designed to gradually expand listening skills. Our aim is that every child will eventually be able to develop sophisticated comprehension through listening, for example to be able to listen to and understand lengthy paragraphs or factual text.

In Facility sessions, for specific listening tasks we position ourselves to the side of a child's better ear, and students must rely solely on their listening for understanding. This encourages children to develop confidence in their hearing potential, as well as further developing their listening skills. This is what we mean by an "auditory-verbal" approach: learning language through maximizing listening potential.

Some students require a more visual approach to learning, and need to develop lip reading skills, which they learn to use in conjunction with their listening. This is called the "oral" approach and is the usual way in which people speak with one another. It is important that children with a hearing impairment learn to read body language and become conversationally competent.

Monitoring and Assessing Language development

We need to observe children closely as they speak and interact with others in order to obtain the truest measure of their abilities and to plan individual objectives for them.

Language sampling is an important part of monitoring how well each student is using language. Sampling via videotape, allows us to observe how each child functions in various language situations, and we also hear the errors a child makes. For children whose language development is immature, we sample through informal conversation. For children who have more sophisticated language levels, we sample a child's ability to retell a story, to give instructions or directions, to give detailed descriptions, to formulate questions, as well as engage in conversation.

We prefer to video samples because videoing allows us to see a child's language in a complete context in which we can monitor their important non-verbal communication skills, such as eye contact, facial expressions and body language. We also record the utterances of the communicative partner, because "the other half" of the conversation provides "the proof" of the child's abilities, to understand, ask for clarification, or for repetition, to keep to the topic or to change it appropriately and to open or close the conversation effectively. We analyse language samples using the rules of English grammar and the expectations for a child's age and stage of language development.

Specific language assessments provide us with highly valuable information about a child's language development and speech perception skills, as compared to children who have had normal hearing all their lives. Our aim is to identify areas that need improvement and then to target them specifically in Facility lessons. We aim that students will achieve a full year's language growth or more in one year, so that they have comparable skills to those of their normally hearing peers. World studies have consistently shown that students with a hearing impairment achieve less than 12 months growth in their language skills every year, and so a gap appears between their skills and those of their peers. Through using assessment results to drive individual programs, it is our aim to close any gap and to assist our students to achieve language levels which are within the normal range.

Facility and Classroom teachers

Teachers working in the Facility are qualified primary school teachers and have also completed post-graduate qualifications as a Teacher of the Deaf. Classroom teachers are all qualified primary teachers. All teachers at Mount View engage in professional development to increase their understanding of hearing impairment and its implications for a child's education.

Class Placements for students

Students are placed in classes according to criteria which include:

- previous experience of class teachers working with the Facility, or in other schools with students who are deaf or hard of hearing
- the specific needs of each child
- friendship preferences

Generally it is our practice to place no more than three students in any one class, in order to both encourage students to form friendships among normally hearing students, as well as making best use of the time a Facility teacher has to spend in the classrooms.

Parents are welcome to discuss educational and social issues surrounding the placement of their child.

Parental involvement

Through participation in Facility and classroom sessions, parents are actively involved in their child's learning. By attending a Facility session every week or fortnight, they gain insight into the next stages of development and learn to see the interplay of targets. They often feel better able to integrate goals into every day meaningful activities and experiences at home and in the community. We encourage parents to take part in Facility sessions, particularly in the early years. As children mature, we expect that they will become more independent in their learning.

If you would like to become a volunteer in our classroom programs, we encourage you to participate in a parent-training program held early in the year.

Student Support Group meetings

The Student Support Group (SSG) represents a partnership in the educational planning process between the parent(s), the student and the school. An SSG meeting is convened for all students with disabilities or impairments. Meetings are convened on a regular basis and are generally held twice a year, but may be called at the request of a program support group member. The focus of the SSG is on educational planning and monitoring of a student's progress. The aims of the program support group are to:

- Ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for, the student work together to establish shared goals for the student's educational future.
- Increase the participation of the student in the educational programs and social life of the school.
- Provide ongoing support for teachers, parents and the student in program planning and direction as well as regular monitoring and evaluation of the student's progress.

Membership of the SSG consists of

- The parent(s), guardian or caregiver of the student.
- A parent advocate (where chosen by the parent).
- A class teacher and/or Facility teacher.
- The principal or Facility coordinator (to act as chairperson).
- The student (where appropriate).

The SSG may invite input from any other person with knowledge of the student or with information relevant to the educational or social needs of the student.

Progress Reports

Class teachers and Facility teachers write separate reports on students' progress in June and December. Class teacher reports focus on the curriculum goals in the Key Learning Areas and student learning outcomes for each semester. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend parent teacher interviews.

Facility reports focus on the needs of individual students. This generally includes each student's goals for developing their listening, language, speech and social skills and includes recommendations for future goals.

Our Parent Group

We have a friendly parent group in the Facility, and we encourage parents to get to know each other. Our parent representatives arrange a number of informal 'get-togethers' – over coffee, for barbecues, film nights etc. throughout the year. They also organise information sessions when parents may like to request speakers, for example former students, the school's educational psychologist, speech pathologist, the research team from Melbourne University, staff from Australian Hearing and the Implant Clinic.

Our current parent representatives are Ange and Felisia who are very happy to speak to new or interested families and answer any questions you might have.

School Visits from Australian Hearing

A paediatric audiologist from Australian Hearing (Dandenong office) attends school every month. Typically the children's ears are checked to make sure there is no wax build up or impedance problems in the middle ear. Parents are most welcome to attend these visits. Please let us know if you'd like an appointment with her. An Australian Hearing technician also visits several times every year to check all equipment.

Speech Pathology

Developing spoken language is core to our program and funding is allocated to speech pathology. The speech pathologist works three days a week with Facility students in the following way:

- Her first priority is to assess all new students to gain understanding of their needs.
- She will review students in the Facility program.
- She will prioritise students according to need.
- Parents are encouraged to attend speech and language lessons as it is very important to follow up activities at home, and to practise targets.
- A timetable is drawn up for all the students who are high priority, and parents are invited to attend regular sessions. She will make activity books with suggestions for home and school practice. The activity book should come to school everyday so that your Facility teacher can include these activities as part of your child's Facility lessons.
- For other students, the speech pathologist acts as a consultant, seeing them on a review only basis. Following the review each student's needs are discussed with the Facility teacher.

Educational psychologist

Mount View Primary School accesses the services of educational psychologists through a referral process. Parents' permission is gained as part of this process and prior to any involvement in the child's program. The psychologist's role includes

- Observation of a child within the class
- Individual counselling

- Small group counselling
- Parent consultation
- Testing to identify a student's strengths and weaknesses.

Termly Planning

For one week towards the end of every term, Mount View teachers are involved in Planning Week. Teachers throughout the school join with their colleagues at each level to reflect on the current term's programs and to plan ahead as a team for the next term. Specialist teachers, including the Facility teachers also will have the opportunity to plan together. There will be some alterations to your child's program during these days.

While teachers meet together every week for planning sessions before and after school, we find that an extended period of planning each term provides highly valuable time to reflect on our programs and prepare for the term ahead.

Teacher Professional Development

Ongoing professional development is essential for all staff at Mount View Primary School if we are to develop progressively higher levels of expertise. We need to update our skills and knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. Facility teachers attend a range of conferences and seminars after school, in the school holidays and occasionally during the school day. It is not always possible to replace teachers on these days and your child may not receive Facility support on these occasions.

Annual Sports day for Primary Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Every year in Term 4, Schools and Facilities with students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing throughout Victoria are invited to participate in a combined sports day. Your child's attendance is encouraged. Students in years Prep-2 participate in a running event followed by tabloid sports. Older students are involved in sprint races, long jump, high jump, shot put and vortex throwing. The day gives an opportunity for students to mix with other students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing from around the state, both oral and those who use Auslan. Families meet together over a picnic lunch.

Conveyance Allowance

Families living more than 4.8km from Mount View PS, via the shortest route, are eligible for a conveyance allowance, paid by the Department of Education. Your child must be attending the closest Deaf Facility to access this allowance. Please record the distance from home to school and ask the Coordinator for the form. If your address is unchanged from year to year, you do not need to reapply.

Finally

It is only through close partnership with families that we can improve the linguistic, educational and social outcomes for each child. We welcome your family to the Mount View Facility and hope that you will enjoy your association here with us.

Please contact me at any time if you have any queries or need any assistance

Sara Kenfield

Facility Coordinator

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