Minimal Hearing Loss

Most of the children entering school now would have had their hearing screened in the first few days of their life through the Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening (UNHS) Program. This is a wonderful program that has ensured better outcomes for children found to have a hearing loss, due to much earlier identification and diagnosis.

Unfortunately, hearing losses in the range 20–35 dB are not identified by UNHS. In addition, many young children are prone to middle ear issues such as ear infections and ‘glue ear’, which can greatly impact on a child’s ability to hear for a period of time until the issue is resolved. Indeed, it has been reported that about 80% of 4–10-year-olds experience a temporary hearing impairment sometime during the school year.

The average child spends at least 45% of the school day in a listening activity; children depend on their hearing to learn. It is therefore important to be aware of how well our students are hearing. During Terms 2 and 3, all children in Reception will have their hearing screened so that we can be sure they are able to hear effectively for learning. This screening process assesses the child’s ability to hear sound quieter than 20 dB over a range of frequencies.

Signs of mild hearing loss or middle ear issues to watch for are:

- having difficulty understanding spoken interactions
- frequent requests for repetition
- confusion with similar sounding words
- inability to follow directions
- finding it difficult to communicate in noisy settings
- distractibility in background noise
- having difficulty locating sound sources
- pulling or pressing on ears
- turning the wrong way when locating a sound
- problems with social or emotional behaviour
- behaviour or attention problems
- poor academic performance.

If you are concerned about your child’s hearing or their ability to listen, please contact me either by phone 8366 6275 or email ocaon@pembroke.sa.edu.au, so that we can work together for the best outcome for your child.

Ms Caon
Coordinator, Hearing Unit