

## Positive signs

### Deaf children talk about their life at school

**Abigaal Gorman-Palmer, 10, is in Year 6 at Laycock Primary School in Islington, north London. She is profoundly deaf and attends the deaf unit and mainstream classes at the school.**

When I first came to Laycock School I was worried that the other children would be horrible to me, but on the first day I made lots of friends. Some people were a bit horrible to me at first, but now that I am in year six, if anyone tries to bully me I can stand up for myself. Bullies don't scare me. The other children treat me like I am normal.

My family is half deaf, half hearing. My parents, my brother, my half-brother and half-sister are all deaf. I have to sign to them. but I hear and talk quite a lot as well. I was deaf when I was born.

At home my mum and I use a minicom. It's a type of telephone that you can type a message into, like a typewriter, and it goes to the other person. When I watch TV I use subtitles so we can understand.

The other children treat me like I am normal. I used to go to a school where all the children were deaf, but since I came to this school I know more people understand me.

Last year in assembly I taught some of the children how to do sign language so they could communicate without talking. If I really don't understand what is happening then my friend Jodie will use sign language. If the other children don't understand me then I repeat it again, and if they still don't understand I go really slowly or I try and talk more clearly. My friends sometimes use sign language and sometimes they don't but I can understand them.

I don't think that my education is suffering because I am deaf. I think my education is the same as everyone else's because I'm quite good at everything. When I am in my mainstream class my teacher treats me like a hearing child because I can understand what she says and lip read her. If I don't understand things they try and help me to understand it.

I really like football My best friend Sarah and I were chosen for the girls' football team. For the Christmas carol concert this year I have been chosen to play the recorder. I can do just about everything a hearing child can except I can't hear without my hearing aid.

**Tyrone Givans, 11, is in year 6 at Laycock Primary School In Islington, north London. He is profoundly deaf and attends the deaf unit and mainstream classes at the school.**

I have been deaf all my life. I am the only deaf person in my family, so sometimes it's hard for me to understand. The best thing about my school is that I have quite a lot of friends, and that helps me a lot. I teach them how to do sign language because if I don't understand something and then someone repeats it in sign language, it makes sense.

When I first started my mainstream class it was quite difficult. When I was in year four, some people used to bully me. Now the other children treat me like a normal hearing person.

I like my teachers because they help me a lot. When I am in my unit class my teachers help me and I can do a lot of work. When I go to my mainstream class with all the hearing children the teacher wears a microphone so I can hear her. If I don't understand the work I can ask my unit teacher to explain it. If my unit teacher is away and the other children are talking, I have to keep on going up to ask what the teacher has been saying. I find learning easy, but sometimes it can be confusing.

My teacher and I also use a radio aid, which means that I can hear her talking in the staff room when she is having her cup of coffee at break and I am in the playground.

My mum has got lots of hearing friends, so when I am at home I speak to them like a hearing child, but when I go back to school I go back to being a deaf child. Sometimes I like being deaf and sometimes I wish I was hearing. I like being deaf because when I go to bed I take my hearing aid out and I can't hear my mum playing music.

I visited a school for deaf children in St Lucia when I went on holiday. In St Lucia the children aren't allowed to take their hearing aids home because their parents can't afford to pay 30. When they go home without their hearing aids they can't understand their parents or anything people say. In England we are lucky because we don't have to pay. We just take our hearing aids home free.

My favourite hobby is playing music. I play the guitar quite well Sometimes I watch my mum cooking and sometimes I cook for my brother. When I am older and in college I would like to learn how to be a chef.

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## About the team

This article was produced by editor Daniel Blackwood 15, Michelle Ijoyah, 9, Kim Ijoyah, 10, and Gillian Antwi-Bosiako, 10. It was published in the [Times Educational Supplement](#).

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