



Supporting CODAs in Education

Practical guidance for inclusive school culture, accessible parent communication, pastoral care and leadership assurance.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

Teachers, SENCOs and school leaders

A practical professional resource to support respectful, individualised practice with Children of Deaf Adults and their families. CODA identity is not itself a diagnosis, deficit, safeguarding indicator or support need.

SCOPE AND STATUS

This is general professional guidance, not legal advice, a statutory procedure or a substitute for local safeguarding policies. Duties differ across England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. Verify local requirements before applying this resource.

An inclusive whole-school approach

A child with Deaf parents does not automatically have SEN, a disability or a safeguarding concern. Schools should embed family accessibility into ordinary admissions, communications, parents' evenings, discipline, attendance and pastoral processes.

In England, schools must follow the statutory Keeping children safe in education 2026 guidance. School obligations across other UK nations and Ireland are different; check the rules for the establishment.

- Capture individual parent communication preferences at enrolment and confirm them when arranging meetings.
- Offer accessible parent contact methods, including video relay or interpreters where suitable.
- Ensure staff know who books interpreters and how to fund/access the provision.

AVOID THIS

Do not ask a child to interpret a parents' evening or meeting because arranging access is inconvenient.

Teaching, curriculum and peer interactions

Diverse families can be reflected positively in teaching materials, languages and school events. Discuss Deaf culture as a community and language, not only as a medical topic. Avoid selecting a CODA pupil as the class educator or asking them to demonstrate signing without consent.

Some pupils may value opportunities to talk with peers with similar family experiences; participation should be voluntary and confidential.

- Challenge teasing, intrusive questions and discrimination promptly.
- Offer pupils control over how much personal family information is shared.
- Include Deaf parents equitably in celebrations, consultations and school governance.

Attendance, communication and educational decisions

Where school messages reach only the child, families may miss significant information. Check whether inaccessible systems are contributing to missed meetings or confusion before attributing non-engagement to a parent.

Ensure SEN, EHCP, pastoral or attendance discussions use appropriate parent communication support and a clear agenda. Keep the pupil's voice visible and do not use the pupil as the interpreter for the parent.

- Provide accessible written summaries and agreed actions.
- Record who is responsible for each follow-up action.
- Review access arrangements after any missed or ineffective appointment.

Pastoral care and proportionate safeguarding

A young person might be upset by persistent questions about Deafness, be dealing with ordinary anxiety or be carrying inappropriate adult responsibilities. Explore the actual concern and its impact. In England follow KCSIE 2026, the school safeguarding policy and DSL routes when concerns arise.

Do not equate a parent's Deafness with parental incapacity or neglect. Equally, do not dismiss a specific risk on grounds of cultural sensitivity: assess actual facts.

- Use factual, specific observations and the child's own words.
- Escalate any disclosure or credible risk under the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Include Deaf parents accessibly in planning unless doing so would create a safeguarding risk.

EXAMPLE

A pupil repeatedly misses a lesson to interpret calls for an adult. Explore the frequency and impact, address access with the service involved, offer support, and consider safeguarding thresholds based on the evidence rather than hearing status.

Leadership audit and implementation

Leaders should test processes rather than rely on staff goodwill. Accessibility depends on procurement, funding, booking, staff training and contingency arrangements as well as policy.

- Nominate a responsible leader for accessible parent communication.
- Audit digital platforms, emergencies, trips, complaints and consent processes.
- Invite Deaf parents to assess whether communication arrangements worked.
- Review any incidents in which a child was used as an interpreter.

Professional references and further reading

Department for Education, Keeping children safe in education 2026 (England) — <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Equality Act 2010 / reasonable adjustment guidance (Great Britain) — <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reasonable-adjustments-a-legal-duty/reasonable-adjustments-a-legal-duty>

Irish Sign Language Act 2017, sections 3, 6 and 7 (Ireland) — <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/act/40/enacted/en/html>

PUBLICATION REVIEW NOTE

For public publication, arrange review by suitably experienced Deaf community representatives, CODAs and the relevant education, clinical or safeguarding leads. Re-check current law, policy and organisational procedures at the time of use.