

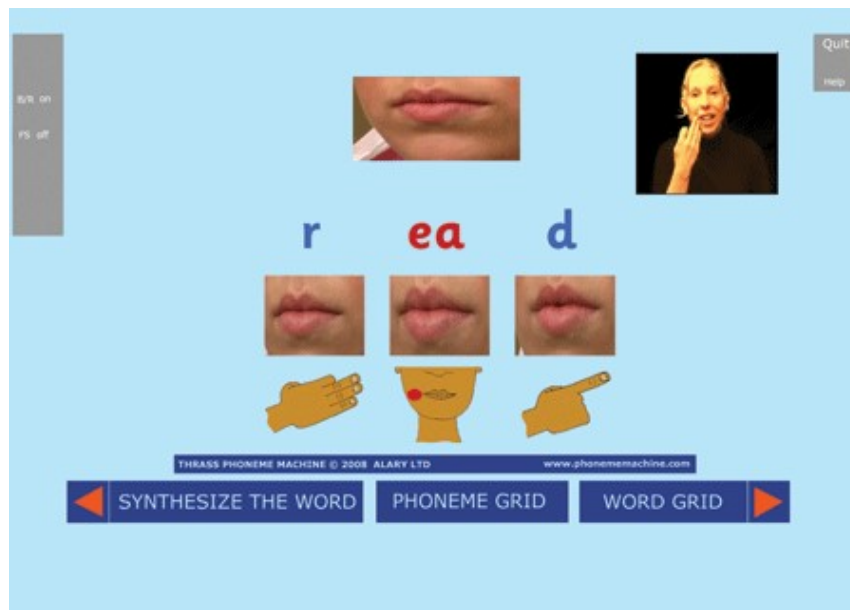
Cued Speech, THRASS and Phonics for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children

By Charlotte Lynch - a Teacher of the Deaf working for Babcock Education's Hearing Impairment Team in Devon. She has used Cued Speech alongside THRASS as well as BSL, to give deaf children in mainstream schools equal access to phonics and other aspects of the English language. Being deaf herself from a young age, she recognises first hand the value of Cued Speech in making all sounds visible which are indistinguishable through lipreading and listening alone.

What is Cued Speech?

Cued Speech is a visual representation of spoken English and gives deaf and hearing impaired children full access to all speech sounds. It is made up of 8 different handshapes and 4 mouth positions to give full visual access to the 44 sounds of English. The basic system can be learnt in a day. Cued Speech tutors in Devon are able to train staff working with deaf and hearing impaired children,

and Teachers of the Deaf can advise on how to apply these skills in the classroom setting. The system gives visual access to the whole of the English language, but can also be used specifically to support literacy and phonics for hearing children with speech processing difficulties or other difficulties such as verbal dyspraxia.



What is THRASS?

THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills) is a visual approach to teaching phonics to all children which has been less popular in recent years due to government policy not to support reading approaches which use pictures and an increasing emphasis on listening. This poses huge problems for deaf children who are unable to access the full range of sounds without visual clues. Children with auditory discrimination issues will also be at a disadvantage. Devised for all children, THRASS is also a valuable specialist intervention tool for these children who cannot fully access phonics through listening alone.

For example sounds 'p' and 'b' may sound very different to a hearing person but look identical on the lips to anyone relying on lipreading. Using the 'THRASS chart', children can be given a memory 'hook' to help them visualise that the sound 'p' can be represented by one letter 'p' as in **p**anda or two letters as in **hip**po, and the sound 'b' can be represented by one letter as in **b**ird or two letters as in **rabb**it. Used in conjunction with Cued Speech, this becomes immediately accessible for deaf children.

THRASS is also a visual tool which can help emerging writers to make spelling choices by embedding visual images in their memory. Sounds are grouped together in a visual way so that the child can be prompted with spelling choices for example, the 'c' sound like at the beginning of cat can be represented by the letter

'c' in **cat**, 'q' in **queen**, ck in **duck**, 'k' in **kitten** and 'ch' in **school**. By presenting these images visually it is much clearer and serves as a memory aid.



THRASS has a full range of materials for hearing children, and also, working with the Cued Speech Association UK, has created additional materials to support deaf children's literacy and understanding of phonics. Babcock Hearing Impairment Team work closely with the Cued Speech Association UK to deliver training to schools using a systematic way of teaching phonics for deaf children. Cued Speech can be used to support the usual order of teaching phonics through programmes such as Letters and Sounds or Read, Write, Ink, but sometimes a more structured approach is needed, using the 'gridding method' shown below. This is similar to the 'sound buttons' method commonly used in schools but with a more visual approach.

Individual words can be 'gridded' on a chart as shown below.

Word	sun			How many letters?	How many sounds?	How many syllables?
Example Words	sun	bus	net			
Spelling Choices	s	u	n	3	3	1
IPA						
Cue Script (sounds)	≡	≡	≡			
Cue Script (whole word)	I*					

Many children who are deaf or hearing impaired or those with limited speech and language will need an alternative whole word approach to support the teaching and learning of phonics as an intervention strategy.

If you know of any children who are not making adequate progress in phonics skills, you may like to find out more through our [training courses](#).