

Ovingdean Hall Foundation update

Claire Simons outlines the opportunities from Ovingdean Hall Foundation for deaf young people and their teachers

Over the past seven years, a small grant-maker has made a big difference to charities and teachers working with deaf children.

Ovingdean Hall Foundation (OHF) funds scholarships for teachers training to become Teachers of the Deaf and makes grants to UK charities supporting deaf children.



OHF evolved out of Ovingdean Hall School for deaf children which closed in 2010 as a result of declining pupil numbers. Trustees set up a foundation to build on the school's legacy and to continue to benefit deaf children and the teachers who support them.

OHF's Trustees have worked with 25 charities and not-for-profit organisation. They have funded research and training bursaries, audiology equipment, theatre, music and sports days, refurbished facilities and contributed toward new-builds.

Training opportunities

OHF has focused on preparing the next generation of professionals who work with deaf children. They offer five scholarships per year for teachers to train to become Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs). OHF's **Con Powell Memorial Scholarships** are managed by **BATOD** and named after their first president. They are aimed at teachers whose local authorities are not obliged to support them financially.

The scholarship programme re-opens in January 2020, and more details can be found on OHF and BATOD's websites.



OHF has worked with **Auditory Verbal UK**, a charity which teaches deaf babies and toddlers to listen and speak using a parent coaching programme, based around play, called Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT). OHF has funded bursaries for Teachers of the Deaf and Speech and Language Therapists to train in this innovative, family-centred early intervention approach.

"A true gift."

said one student of her bursary.



Access to the arts

Music and drama were key areas of the curriculum at Ovingdean Hall School, and OHF has continued this work by collaborating with theatre and music charities.

OHF has a long partnership with **Mousetrap Theatre Projects (MTP)** and helped to develop their *Playmakers* projects. This is a scheme where deaf school children



work with drama practitioners and playwrights to produce their own play, which is then performed by a company of deaf and hearing actors at a London theatre. "When *Playmakers* was piloted, OHF provided funding and advice," said Gayle Bryans, MTP's Deputy Director. "Their support over a number of years has helped us develop it into an enormously successful project."

OHF now supports their popular Stageseen theatre days for deaf children. Each event takes place at a London theatre and includes a drama workshop exploring character and themes, a backstage tour and a matinee performance which is either British Sign Language interpreted or captioned.

OHF has also supported **Polka Theatre** to adapt four shows, including *The Borrowers* and *Wind in the Willows*, for deaf children. In 2019, OHF supported their programme in schools, *Polka40*, which celebrated 40 years of the theatre. OHF specifically supported a class of 19 pupils at the hearing impairment unit in Rushy Meadow Primary to create their own short play, inspired by props, costumes and workshops from Polka theatre and practitioners.



OHF has recently started working with **Music and the Deaf**, a charity which is committed to enriching the lives of deaf children through music. OHF's grant enabled the charity to deliver musical inspiration days to 114 deaf children, with 80% saying that they were keen to continue playing music.



Bringing deaf children together

Over the past few years, OHF has supported **The Ear Foundation's** activities holidays for deaf young people, funding places for those who might otherwise struggle to attend.



The Ear Foundation®

Trustees also support the leadership course for young deaf adults, with participants going on to help lead the activities holidays. One young person said, "You have truly changed my life by giving me a wonderful opportunity to be a leader. It has been so inspiring."

OHF has helped to fund events and training for deaf children organised by sports charity **Panathlon Foundation**. They have brought deaf children



together to enjoy activities such as boccia, swimming, ten pin bowling, multisports and leadership training, while building communication skills and confidence. "The backing of OHF has been instrumental to the rapid growth of events and participation numbers," said Tony Waymouth, Chief Operating Officer. "Find out more at www.panathlon.com or contact me at tony@panathlon.com"

Please contact these charities to find out about theatre, music and sports events for your deaf pupils.

Research

OHF is supporting a pioneering seven-year study into the performance of deaf children at school. The data collection is being carried out by **National Sensory Impairment Partnership (NatSIP)**, working in partnership with the Consortium of Research into Deaf Education (CRIDE), University College London and City – University of London. Pupils will be tracked across their school years, with the aim being to improve education outcomes for deaf children.



OHF is encouraging the next generation of professionals working with deaf children by funding a number of research grants for students on the MSc in Audiology and Deaf Education programmes at **The University of Manchester**. Dr Kai Uss, teaching and programme lead at the Manchester Centre for Audiology and Deafness, said the funding, "will promote the training of the future leaders in audiology and associated services across the country." The grant is facilitated by James Mander, the audiologist at our partner charity Ewing Foundation.



Supporting mental health and wellbeing

OHF has a long relationship with **SignHealth**, having supported their Domestic Abuse Service for three years. OHF funded the salary of a Young People's Violence Advisor (YPVA), who was herself deaf, to deliver workshops and one-to-one sessions to d/Deaf young people, helping them to stay safe online and in relationships. OHF is now helping to fund an Advisor to support d/Deaf women and girls in Sussex who have experienced or witnessed abuse.



Helping charities to grow

OHF has helped other charities grow their provision for deaf children and their families. It has supported a number of projects at **The Elizabeth Foundation**, including the development of a new hearing test centre. OHF has also supported their new national online home learning programme that gives information and practical support to families.



OHF has also funded the building or refurbishment of spaces for living or learning. They sponsored rooms within the new centres at **The Ear Foundation** and **Linden Lodge School**, a music room and library at **St John's School for the Deaf**, a sensory room at **The Seashell Trust**, an IT suite at **Hamilton Lodge School** and contributed toward the **NDCS's** Listening Bus.

Furthermore, by providing the funding for pilot projects at Mousetrap and AVUK, OHF has helped these charities to secure funding from other grant-makers.

Reducing isolation

All of these projects have the unifying aim of reducing the isolation deafness can bring to deaf children, their families and the professionals who support them.

OHF also retains links with its former students' reunion committee and continues to be supported by a community of kind and loyal donors. Former Ovingdean Hall School staff member Jonathan Coe also supports OHF as a grants advisor.

OHF has built on the legacy of Ovingdean Hall School, continuing its aims and ethos, and now has an identity and impact of its own. If you would like to find out more, please visit www.ovingdeanhall.org



Claire Simons, carries out fundraising and communications for Ovingdean Hall Foundation (OHF). OHF is managed by Ewing Foundation, a charity which supports the professionals who work with deaf children.

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BATOD Magazine

This article was published in the January 2020 issue.

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BATOD
British Association of
Teachers of the Deaf

MAGAZINE • January 2020 • ISSN 1336-0799 • www.batod.org.uk

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