

Hearing – the most ignored human sense in building design

Building designers will spend much time perfecting the look of a development, its colour, its feel, its ventilation and its lighting but sadly the 'way a building sounds' during use is rarely considered. So as Noise Action Week passes it might be a good



time to consider the noise and sound quality within the places we provide for early years settings. The design of these spaces is important if noise is to be minimised, staff welfare is to be improved and children's learning experience enhanced. So has this point been overlooked where you work?

Education Regulations and Standards stipulate that:

“Each room or other space in a school building shall be designed and constructed in such a way that it has the acoustic conditions and the insulation against disturbance by noise appropriate to its intended use.”

Since 2003 Building Control officers should have ensured that all new primary and secondary school development would achieve the acoustic design goals defined in Building Bulletin 93 – Acoustics Design of Schools. These requirements should also apply to nursery settings when they were developed within school complexes, but strangely the same developments constructed elsewhere were left unregulated and as a consequence acoustic design was rarely considered. The outcome is that the acoustic design of some Early Years Settings will be poor and will encourage the growth of noise and make for a difficult work environment.

There are many companies eager to sell products to improve acoustic design but these will rarely consider the present situation and the improvement need. Further independent advice on your needs and requirements can be sought from the acoustic advisor to SCC and helpful details can be found here <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/consumer-testing/acoustic-services/>



Remember the impacts of poor acoustics on our hearing are similar to poor light on our vision.

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