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Isaac's hearing condition will not hold him back on the first day of school

The smile on Isaac's face says it all as he 'shows off' his new uniform in preparation for the first day at 'big' school.

For parents Michelle and Charlie Chen this milestone is one that was originally fraught with uncertainty. Isaac was born with lesser known congenital birth defect 'Microtia and Atresia' which resulted in a deformed outer right ear and has impacted his hearing.

At just a few months of age, Isaac's parents joined Queensland based not-for-profit, Hear and Say's Early Intervention and Microtia and Atresia Support Programs, and more recently have travelled to the US to receive reconstructive surgery on Isaac's malformed ear.

Mum Michelle explained that Hear and Say provided the entire family with a range of supports to ensure Isaac's condition would not hold him back.

"Hear and Say has been a 'one stop shop' providing audiology, speech and language therapy lessons, and very importantly the support we needed to better understand Microtia and Atresia.

"Charlie and I cannot thank Hear and Say enough for what they have done for Isaac. His speech and language is on par with his hearing peers, and he is a happy and sociable little boy. We are very proud of him and feel confident he will do well when he starts Prep in just a few weeks' time," Michelle said.

Hear and Say's support of children like Isaac doesn't end when they transition to school. Isaac's Listening and Spoken Language Specialist Ms Emma Fraser said, steps are in place to ensure that the school and his teacher are aware that Isaac has Microtia and Atresia; that sound acoustics in the classroom will be monitored; and that he is prepared to answer questions about his ear, and to speak up in class if he has difficulty hearing.

"We know that correct acoustics in the classroom will not just help Isaac but can benefit all children as well as reduce strain on the teacher's voice, a win-win for everyone in the classroom," Ms Fraser said.

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For more details and to arrange interviews contact Lois Shuttleworth, Public Relations Specialist, Hear and Say at lois.shuttleworth@hearandsay.com.au or 0481 212 420

About Hear and Say

Established in 1992 by Dr Dimity Dornan AO, Hear and Say today provides services and programs to children, young adults and families across five centres as well as a Telepractice programs reaching out to rural and remote families. Hear and Say also provides the 'Hear to Learn' School Hearing Screening Program and paediatric hearing services - as a child's hearing can change over time.

Our aim is to help all children to hear, listen and speak so they can attend a regular school, have wider career choices and can more fully participate in their community. Hear and Say interfaces state-of-the-art hearing technology (digital hearing aids and implantable technology such as cochlear implants) with the Auditory-Verbal Therapy approach.

As a not-for-profit organisation Hear and Say must raise more than \$10,000 each year, for up to five years, to fill the funding gap so that one child with hearing loss can learn to listen and speak. Hear and Say is committed to using clinical research to measure outcomes and its success lies in the vital role that parents/caregivers play in teaching their children to listen and speak.



About Microtia and Atresia

Microtia

This congenital disorder occurs in 1 in 6,000 births world-wide. It causes a deformity of one or both ears in which the outer ear is underdeveloped or absent. Microtia is almost always accompanied by Atresia because the baby's outer ear and the ear canal develop together during pregnancy.

Atresia

Atresia is the absence of an external ear canal and, in many instances the ear drum and ear bones can also be affected. This means that as there is no canal for sound to travel through, these children are born with a conductive hearing loss.