Table 2

Differential diagnoses for upper respiratory tract complaints in children, in likely order of increasing age of child

Differential	History	Signs
Tonsillar hypertrophy	Snoring, nasal speech	Mouth breathing, hypertrophy/kissing tonsils
Foreign body in young child	History or accessibility to small objects	Visualise. To remove: parent blows through other nostril with closed glottis
Glue ear	Hearing loss, perforation	Middle ear effusion
Acute/chronic rhino-sinusitis	Purulent discharge, headache, posterior discharge/drip/cough	Tender sinuses, purulent discharge, responds to antibiotics
Allergic rhinitis	Nasal blockage with itchy eyes, sneezing and coughing, worsening with environmental triggers	Mouth breathing, allergic salute, nasal crease, allergic shiners, Morgan Denny's folds, red nasal turbinates, responds to nasal steroids
Multi-trigger wheeze = asthma	Coughing or difficulty in breathing in the evenings/mornings, on exertion, in cold air or allergen exposure	Wheeze on auscultation, poor peak flow or air entry
Nasal polyps	Nasal congestion with possible loss of sense of smell, cystic fibrosis or aspirin hypersensitivity	Polyps (pale, mobile, boggy and insensible) and possible signs of cystic fibrosis (weight loss, chesty cough and salty sweat)
Obstructive sleep apnoea	Snoring with episodes of apnoea, wakeful nights, sleeping in day	No specific signs
Septal deviation	Likely history of trauma	Deviated septum or cherry haematoma (check patency)