

Definition:

Children and young people have a visual impairment if their vision cannot be corrected to within normal limits by the wearing of glasses or contact lenses.

Visual impairment will impact upon all areas of the curriculum and will require specialist advice and support in order for pupils to be fully included in their local settings, achieve their academic potential and have high levels of emotional resilience.

Characteristics seen in the classroom:

- Eye turn, squint, or closure/ covering one eye to look
- Eyes appear crusted, red-rimmed, sore or swollen
- Uncontrolled eye movements, misshapen pupils or drooping eyelids
- Rubbing eyes in discomfort or screwing up eyes to view
- Aversion to glare/bright light
- Unusual head posture/ tilt
- Holding printed materials at an odd distance/angle
- Facial grimaces during close work with complaints of blurring, nausea, dizziness, headache
- Reading problems especially small print in textbooks and diagrams
- Clumsiness (movement and location of items)
- Note-taking problems
- Large or 'spidery' handwriting
- Losing place in text
- Rapid fall-off in attention, confidence or standard of work
- Tiring more quickly

Where to go for help:

- Sensory Inclusion Service (SIS)

Visual Impairment

Assessment and Diagnosis:

- Assessment of a child/young person's functional vision and the impact of their visual impairment on accessing education alongside their fully sighted peers should be carried out by a Teacher of the Visually Impaired.
- Assessment of functional vision will include visual acuities for near vision and distance, colour vision, visual fields and ability to access complex, visually cluttered materials of poor contrast e.g. maps or busy pictures.
- Professional knowledge and experience combined with observation and close liaison with the child/ young person, families and other professionals is an important aspect of assessment.
- In the first instance settings and families are advised that a child with a visual concern should be seen by an Optician or GP who will, if necessary refer to a Consultant Ophthalmologist.
- Referrals to SIS are made by Consultant Ophthalmologists.

Frequently used Interventions:

- Use an uncluttered layout and good contrast.
- Visually friendly fonts.
- Avoid use of documents with poor contrast such as faded photocopies.
- Provide own copies of resource materials for some students.
- Never discourage head turn/tilt/viewing distance/ position.
- Provide extra time to scan visually complex materials and fine detail.
- Seat the student at the front/ close to the focal point of the lesson.
- Glare on the whiteboard should be minimised (dim the lights during interactive whiteboard presentations and control glare with blinds/curtains).
- Make handwritten board notes clear and in bold black pen for ease of visual access (own paper copy helps also).
- Low vision aids and specialist ICT software.