

**Information for parents/carers and schools**

**Visual Impairment Service**

What is a visual impairment?

This information provides a basic introduction to the problems faced by children with a visual impairment. There are also some helpful strategies for supporting visually impaired children with their learning.

# Types of visual impairment

A visual impairment can be identified in many ways:

* Restrictions in the visual field.
* Difficulties with scanning, tracking, focusing, fixating.
* Difficulties seeing close to and far away, even with glasses.
* Gross distortion of what is being seen and perceived.
* Difficulties with visual fixation.
* Problems in maintaining and changing focus at long and short distances.
* Distortions in colour perception.
* Visual fatigue.
* Additional time required to process visual information.

# Understanding more

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| Terminology |
| Blind | Severe | Partially sighted | Normal vision |
|  |  |  |  |
| Totallyblind | Perception of light | Count fingers | Object perception | Very low acuity | Vision may be affected by field defectst |

## The chart above shows the range in visual impairment.

The implications for learning will depend on several factors:

* The age of onset of the eye condition.
* Parental and family attitude.
* Motivation and general intelligence level of the child.
* Social and emotional security of the child.
* The level of visual discomfort and fatigue.

It is important to note that the pace of learning may be slower, especially in subjects which are highly visual. Incidental learning and the basic knowledge of everyday objects and experiences is restricted by visual impairment and progress may not be an accurate reflection of a child’s true ability.

Holding a book close to the eyes will not harm vision and for some pupils, it may be the only way of getting the print into focus. Nor will sitting close to the TV. Having a visual impairment does not necessarily mean that other senses, such as hearing are highly developed.

# Strategies to support learning

* Teach word processing skills.
* Teach touch typing skills.
* Teach to read and write braille (if needed).
* The provision of a laptop computer, which has the facility for different sizes of print will greatly assist learning.
* The provision of a tablet such as an iPad to download a variety of APPs such as a scientific calculator. Also, to photograph board work and textbooks and enlarge with finger pinch or use voice over function.
* Make use of specialist software like Supernova providing the facility for all text on the computer screen to be enlarged and read aloud by a computer voice.
* Use appropriate magnifiers for reading some small print activities.
* Teach independent living and self-help skills. These should include:
	+ Eating.
	+ Personal grooming.
	+ Relationships with others including those with the opposite sex.
	+ Long cane skills.
* A child with a visual impairment may be allowed extra time to complete class tests. They may also qualify for access arrangements for examinations.