***Manston Primary School***

**A Quick Guide to Visual Impairment**

# What is Visual Impairment?

Visual impairment is the term **used to describe a loss of sight that cannot be corrected using glasses or contact lenses**.

There are two main classifications of visual impairment:

* Registered partially sighted, which means the level of sight impairment is moderate.
* Registered severely sight impaired, which used to be called registered blind where activities that rely on eyesight become impossible.

A consultant ophthalmologist is responsible for registering an individual as blind or partially sighted.

The four main degrees of visual impairment:

* Mild –visual acuity worse than 6/12 to 6/18.
* Moderate –visual acuity worse than 6/18 to 6/36.
* Severe –visual acuity worse than 6/60 to 3/60.
* Profound –visual acuity worse than 3/60.

Vision acts as the unifying sense. It confirms input from touch and hearing and acts as a bridge between information from our other senses. **It is estimated that 80% of all learning** **is through the visual pathway.**

# Implications for a pupil

Common problems-

* Reduced visual field
* Problems with eye movements
* Problems with glare
* Visual processing issues
* Colour vision deficiency
* Reduced sharpness of vision (visual acuity)
* Reduced contrast sensitivity

One or all can lead to problems accessing the curriculum, mobility needs and SEMH needs.

How might you recognise a child with a visual impairment?

* Misses things when reaching for them
* Trips
* Has an unusual head tilt
* Only responds on one side
* Has “wobbly” eyes
* Holds work up to eyes
* Produces untidy or unusually positioned work
* Eyes look tired, red, or swollen
* Bend very close to work

# How to help – top tips

Managing the Classroom Environment

1. Language: say child’s name to gain attention, ensure they are looking at you before you begin to speak. Use precise verbal instructions. Don’t rely on facial expressions and body language.
2. Seating: seat near to focus of activity or board. The pupil may need to sit in different places for different activities
3. Lighting: suitable light source, good even lighting, avoid glare control with blinds/curtains.
4. Printed resources: bold, clear, uncluttered, adapt to child’s print specification and individual needs. It is good practice for the child NOT to share any text
5. Recording work: user appropriate writing tools- black pen, 2B pencil- good contrast. They may use plain exercise books, darker/wider lines or may record by typing or use technology.
6. Storage: organise resources, clearly label, keep in predictable or consistent locations. Provide additional space at child’s desk for equipment, large print/Braille texts
7. Time: allow time to explore pictures and resources.
8. Visual Fatigue: “Seeing” requires a good deal of effort and concentration, which may affect motivation, due to the visual fatigue experienced after prolonged periods of close work.

# Further advice and support

**Useful Websites:**

RNIB- See differently - [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

LOOK [Look UK – Supporting Visually Impaired Young People to Thrive (look-uk.org)](https://www.look-uk.org/)

BID [www.bid.org.uk/](http://www.bid.org.uk/) [Leeds Hearing & Sight Loss Service - BID Services](https://www.bid.org.uk/hearing-impairment-menu/leeds-hearing-and-sight-loss-service)

Scottish Sensory [Scottish Sensory Centre: VI Resources (ed.ac.uk)](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/resources/vilist.html)

Positive Eye [SEND training for teachers teaching visually impaired students (positiveeye.co.uk)](https://positiveeye.co.uk/)

VICTA [Empowering Children and Young Adults who are Blind or Partially Sighted](https://www.victa.org.uk/) [www.victa.org.uk](http://www.victa.org.uk)

**Reading**:

[Scottish Sensory Centre: Research (ed.ac.uk)](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/research/)