



Pupils with Sensory Disabilities

Visual Impairment



Visual Impairment



Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Read what is being written on the board and/or describe what is pictured in the presentation.** Allow the pupil time to handle tactually adapted materials.
2. **Face the class when speaking.** Speak clearly in a normal voice, not loudly, slowly or with exaggeration. Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking. If in doubt ask the pupil if the pace is right.
3. **Seat or encourage the visually impaired pupil to come to the front of the classroom or presentation area** in order to be certain that s/he hears all instruction/explanation correctly.
4. **Provide materials to be transcribed in braille,** preferably electronically, as some text can be transcribed using computer translation software.
5. **Observe the pupil and wait until the pupil asks for help** and provide minimal assistance only as needed to build self-confidence and independence.
6. **Keep furniture arrangement consistent** or inform and/or involve the pupil in case of rearranging. Avoid leaving doors and drawers ajar or chairs out from under desks.
7. **Address all pupils by name** so that the visually impaired pupil can learn to associate names with voices of classmates. Address the visually impaired pupil by name as well, so s/he knows when s/he is being spoken to.
8. **Encourage the pupil's use of proper posture and the development of social skills.** Discourage any inappropriate mannerisms to maximise the pupil's social, educational and career potential.
9. **Give the visually impaired pupil as many opportunities to help others as to be helped by others.**

[Reference: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/instructional-resources/1911-classroom-strategies-for-regular-education-teachers-who-have-students-with-visual-impairments>]



School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

Announcement / Sign at School

Equip school spaces with electronic devices, which use ultrasound or infrared light to detect when a physical object comes near.

Curricular Adaptations

Inform teachers to make necessary adaptations to the curriculum tasks.

Discipline

Allow for visually impaired pupils to be able to tape record classes and, if necessary, transcribe the class lecture into braille.

[Reference: <http://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/helping-students-with-visual-impairments>]

Educational Visits / Field Trips / Camps / School Exchanges / Trips Abroad

Make sure that a person is assigned to be responsible for the pupil, and is available to direct the pupil when s/he needs to cross the street during a school trip.

Homework

Allow visually impaired pupils to practice their reading skills aloud only if they feel comfortable in doing so.

Parents / Parents' Associations

Enhance collaboration with families and other professionals in order to monitor progress and to discuss issues that might be related to the social life of the pupil.

Safety

1. **Provide specialised services**, which address the unique academic and non-academic curriculum needs of pupils with visual impairments.
2. **Equip school spaces with electronic devices**, which use ultrasound or infrared light to detect when a physical object comes near.
3. **Make sure that a person is assigned to be responsible for the pupil**, and is available to direct the pupil when s/he needs to cross the street during a school trip.

School Celebrations / Events / Activities

Include visually impaired pupils in school and class events by differentiating their role and contribution.

School Purchases

1. Buy specialised books, materials and equipment for learning through alternative modes.
2. Equip school spaces with electronic devices, **which use ultrasound or infrared light to detect when a physical object comes near.**

Teacher Professional Development

Provide training for teachers related to the main difficulties of pupils in classes, the signs for early identification and assessment and practical tips for the teachers in order to support those pupils in the class. Provide specialised services, which address the unique academic and non-academic curriculum needs of pupils with visual impairments.

Technology

Buy specialised books, materials and equipment for learning through alternative modes.

Supportive Literature

Definition: "Visual impairment, also known as vision impairment or vision loss, is a decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses." ("Change the Definition of Blindness" (PDF). *World Health Organisation*. Retrieved 23 May 2015).

The most common vision impairments affect:

- The sharpness or clarity of vision (visual acuity)
- The normal range of what you can see (visual fields)
- Colour

Pupils with visual impairments have unique educational needs, which are most effectively met using a team approach of professionals, parents and pupils. In order to meet their unique needs, pupils must have specialised services, books and materials in appropriate media (including braille), as well as specialised equipment and technology to assure equal access to the core and specialised curricula, and to enable them to most effectively compete with their peers in school and ultimately in society.

All pupils have to manage their workload as effectively as they can, but for visually impaired pupils this can be much more time-consuming and requires good organisational skills.

Lesson

It is a great help if visually impaired pupils can be provided with any lesson's notes or handouts, preferably in advance, so that they can arrange to have them transcribed into their preferred medium.

If during lessons new terms are written on the board, an oral explanation and spelling should be given.

Seemingly minor issues, such as finding a place in a busy classroom, can be a source of great embarrassment. Other pupils do not always offer assistance, mainly through lack of confidence about how they should react. If the teacher can deal with these situations confidently and sensitively, it is helpful for everyone.

Written Work

Guidance on writing development is no different for a visually impaired pupil than for any other pupil. However, any formative comments made on written work need to be made accessible to the pupil, for example by writing them in enlarged screen, on a separate page or emailing them to the pupil, rather than writing them by hand.

Students working in small groups

If visually impaired pupils express concerns about how other pupils are reacting to their disability discuss with the pupil how s/he would like these situations to be handled. After all, s/he is the expert in knowing her/his own needs, and everyone is different.

Communication

It is important to agree a means of communicating which is easily accessible for the pupil: this might be by e-mail, telephone (suitable with older pupils) or by having extra time to follow a specific lesson (with younger students).

[References: <http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/professional-development/teachers/inclusive-education/1235>
<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/accessibility/staff/supporting-students-with-disabilities/information-for-staff-teaching-blind-and-visually-impaired-students>]

Useful Websites

American Foundation for the Blind
<http://www.afb.org>

Teaching Pupils with Visual Impairments
<http://www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/>

Care of the Patient with Visual Impairment (Low Vision Rehabilitation)
<http://www.aoa.org/documents/CPG-14.pdf>

Facts About Vision Loss
http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/VisionLossFactSheet.pdf

Defining visual impairment

<http://www.specialeducationguide.com/disability-profiles/visual-impairment/>

Instructional Strategies for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

<http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/instructional-strategies-students-who-are-blind-or-visually-impaired>

References

Brian G.; Taylor H. (2001). "Cataract Blindness – Challenges for the 21st Century". Bulletin of the World Health Organisation. 79 (3)

Koenig, A. J., & Holbrook, M. C. (Eds.). (2000). Foundations of education, Vol. 2: Instructional strategies for teaching children and youths with visual impairments, New York: AFB Press.

Virgili G, Acosta R, Grover LL, Bentley SA, Giacomelli G (2013). "Reading aids for adults with low vision". Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 10: CD003303

Waterfield, J. and West, B. (2008) Meeting the specific requirements of Blind and Partially Sighted Students studying in Higher Education in the UK University of Plymouth: Plymouth