

How to Support Children with Visual Impairment

Education Bureau 2015

Introduction

Parents always wish to provide their children with the best living and learning environment in order to nurture them to achieve success in future. With early identification and support, children with special educational needs (SEN) may adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potentials.

What is Visual Impairment (VI)?

VI refers to the vision of the better eye which, even with eyeglasses or corrective surgery, cannot be corrected to the normal level.

Ophthalmologists will classify an individual as having mild low vision, moderate low vision, severe low vision or total blindness according to his/her visual acuity, visual field and other contributing factors.

Children with VI may exhibit the following:

- Often knocking down or bumping into objects unaccountably which may cause injuries;
- Unwilling to move around;
- Not engaging in eye contact during conversation;
- Often tilting their heads when trying to see objects in detail;
- Having difficulties in describing the light intensity, distance, volume or colour of objects;
- Often keeping a very close distance to the books when reading or writing; and
- Skipping lines frequently when reading.

Roles of Parents

I Suspect that My Child may have VI...

- Arrange assessment and examination for your child as early as possible so that appropriate treatment and intervention can be arranged for him/her; and
- Initiate contact with his/her teachers or the student guidance personnel of the school. Schools can then give appropriate support services.

My Child is Assessed to have VI...

Visual Condition

- Provide the school with the visual condition and related information of your child promptly and proactively;
- Pay attention to your child's visual condition and arrange for regular vision assessment

for him/her in accordance with the advice of ophthalmologists or related professionals; and

- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning in school; and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary.

Reading and Writing

- Pay attention to the direction and intensity of light sources to facilitate your child's reading and writing; and
- Be vigilant about whether your child encounters any difficulties if he/she uses Braille or tactile graphics and seek help and professional advice from the school and the resource teacher (Resource Support Programme for Visually Impaired Students) when needed.

Use of Assistive Aids

- Encourage your child to use suitable assistive aids to enhance his/her learning effectiveness. Common assistive aids include Braille books, audio CDs, telescopes, magnifying glasses, CCTV magnifiers, computers and Braille displays.

Development of Concepts

- Provide clear instructions on directions and distance to strengthen your child's sense of direction and spatial relationship; and
- Describe objects and concepts to your child concretely and guide him/her to use various sensory skills to explore accordingly so as to help him/her develop the related concepts.

Orientation and Mobility

- Let your child hold the parents' arm while walking to let him/her know whether he/she is moving on a flat surface, going upstairs/downstairs, or changing directions through the parents' movements; and
- Participate in community and outdoor activities with your child to let him/her practise his/her orientation and mobility skills, and enhance his/her life experience.

Communication Skills

- Remind your child to face the person whom he/she is talking or listening to and encourage him/her to express his/her feelings and needs in an appropriate manner;
- Observe whether your child is able to keep a tidy appearance and good posture and to remind him/her to do so when necessary, thus making him/her more approachable; and
- Develop your child's verbal, hearing and tactile communication abilities through daily life activities.

Living Skills

- Arrange for your child to participate in the household chores that are within his/her capabilities so as to train up his/her life skills; and
- Teach your child to keep the house tidy to avoid accidents, e.g. keep the floor dry and place objects in an orderly manner.

For further information on supporting children with SEN, parents may refer to the “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” from the Education Bureau (EDB) website (please see the back page for the website).

Support Services and Strategies

In general, subject to the assessments and recommendations of professionals and with the consent of parents, the EDB will refer students with moderate low vision or below to special schools for students with VI so as to receive intensive support:

Special Schools

- Ebenezer School provides education services for students with moderate low vision or below so as to facilitate them to overcome the barriers in their learning and to develop their potential to the fullest;
- For students with VI and moderate intellectual disability, parents may consider Ebenezer New Hope School;
- The school premises, facilities and curriculum are specially designed to facilitate effective learning of the students;
- These two schools provide students with specialized training, such as use of Braille, Tactile Diagrams Reading, Orientation and Mobility, etc., so as to equip them with the skills to overcome the learning difficulties caused by VI; and
- The two schools also provide boarding sections to those students who are in need of the service. The boarding sections also provide the students with life skills training to facilitate them to live independently.
- Students with mild low vision will be enrolled in ordinary schools. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of the students:

Ordinary Schools

Schools will devise plans to help students with VI to adapt to the schools settings to facilitate them to learn effectively;

Schools will provide accommodations, according to advices from relevant professionals, on learning materials, teaching approaches, assessments to support students with VI to learn effectively;

Schools will jointly formulate long term learning plans with parents and students concerned in accordance with their individual abilities, visual conditions, interests, etc. to facilitate the development of their competence;

Schools will provide counseling services for supporting the emotional needs of their students with VI; and

Schools may purchase special furniture and assistive aids or carry out minor conversion works to meet the needs of students.

Special Support

➤ **Resource Support Programme for Visually Impaired Students (RSP)**

- The resource teachers (RT) of Ebenezer School provide support for students with moderate low vision or below who are studying in ordinary schools or special schools other than those for students with VI;
- The RT visit schools regularly to help students learn and conduct training. They also provide professional advice for schools to help teachers cater for the needs of students with VI; and
- Braille Production Unit of Ebenezer School provides Braille transcription of learning materials as well as test and examination papers for the schools receiving support. The Unit also transcribes homework and answer sheets submitted in Braille by students with VI into print format to facilitate marking by their teachers.

➤ **Braille Textbook Transcription Service**

Funded by the EDB, the Centralised Braille Production Centre of the Hong Kong Society for the Blind provides Braille textbook transcription service for students with VI. The Centre also provides the students with Braille books, Braille e-books, tactile graphics, etc.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<http://www.edb.gov.hk>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office (Tel: 2863 4646)

Kowloon Regional Education Office (Tel: 3698 4108)

New Territories East Regional Education Office (Tel: 2639 4876)

New Territories West Regional Education Office (Tel: 2437 7272)

General Enquiries on Special Education (Tel: 3698 3957)

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong (Tel: 3695 0486)
- Kowloon (Tel: 3698 4321)
- New Territories East (Tel: 3547 2228)
- New Territories West (Tel: 2437 7270)

Special Education Resource Centre (Tel: 3698 3900)

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/index.html>

Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/download/ieparentguide.pdf>

Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/support/wsa/ie%20guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

- Child Assessment Service (Tel: 2246 6659)

<http://www.dhcas.gov.hk/eindex.html>

- Student Health Service (Tel: 2349 4212)

<http://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index>

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

<http://hkcss.org.hk/e>

OneClick

<http://oneclick.hku.hk/en>

Hong Kong Eye Hospital (Tel: 2762 3007)

[http://www.ha.org.hk/visitor/ha_visitor_index.asp?Content_ID=100159
&Lang=ENG&Dimension=100&Parent_ID=10177&Ver=HTML](http://www.ha.org.hk/visitor/ha_visitor_index.asp?Content_ID=100159&Lang=ENG&Dimension=100&Parent_ID=10177&Ver=HTML)

The Hong Kong Society for the Blind (Tel: 2778 8332)

<http://www.hksb.org.hk/en>

- Centralised Braille Production Centre (Tel: 3723 8308)
- Parents Resource Centre for Visually Impaired Children (Tel: 2994 9655)
- General Eye and Low Vision Centre (Tel: 2778 1772)
- Vision 2020 Low Vision Resource Centre (Tel: 3723 8397)

Hong Kong Blind Union (Tel: 2339 0666)

http://www.hkbu.org.hk/en_index.php

- Jockey Club Vocational And Education Resources Centre (Tel: 2337 2736)

Retina Hong Kong (Tel: 2708 9363)

<http://www.retina.org.hk> (Chinese Version Only)

Hong Kong Polytechnic University – The Optometry Clinic (Tel: 2766 5225)

<http://www.polyu.edu.hk/so/patients.php?pageid=286&dispmode=1&lang=en>