

How to Support Children with Visual Impairment

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

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 VI, moderate VI, severe VI 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
- 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
- Initiate contact with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, class teacher, student guidance personnel or school social workers. 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
- 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
- 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 audio CDs,

telescopes, magnifying glasses, desktop/hand-held CCTV magnifiers, computers, tablet computers, smart phones, and Braille displays, etc.

Development of Concepts

- Provide clear instructions on directions and distance to strengthen your child's sense of direction and spatial relationship
- 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 your 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
- 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
- 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

- Teach your child to keep the house tidy to avoid accidents, e.g. keep the floor dry and place objects in an orderly manner

Support Services and Strategies

In general, subject to the assessments and recommendations of professionals and with the consent of parents, the Education Bureau (EDB) will refer students with moderate VI or below to special schools for students with VI so that they can receive intensive support. Students with mild VI will be enrolled in ordinary schools. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of the students:

Special Schools

- Ebenezer School provides education services for students with moderate VI 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 with VI
- These two schools provide students with specialised training, such as the use of Braille, low vision training, orientation and mobility, etc., so as to equip them with the skills to overcome the difficulties in learning and daily life caused by VI
- 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

Ordinary Schools

- Schools will devise plans to help students with VI to adapt to school 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 also provide counselling services for supporting the emotional needs of their students with VI
- 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**
 - The resource teachers (RTs) of Ebenezer School provide support for students with moderate VI or below who are studying in ordinary schools or special schools other than those for students with VI
 - The RTs 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
 - 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 in need. The Centre also provides the students with Braille books, Braille e-books, and tactile graphics, etc.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

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

Hong Kong Regional Education Office	2863 4646
Kowloon Regional Education Office	3698 4108
New Territories East Regional Education Office	2639 4876
New Territories West Regional Education Office	2437 7272
General Enquiries on Special Education	3698 3957
Special Education Support 2 Section	3698 3727

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with VI

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/visual-impairment/index.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- Operation Guide on the “Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

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

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>