

Compensating for visual loss in the classroom

While many eye defects can be corrected with glasses, some children will still have problems and will need extra help.

Such children should be encouraged to use the sight they have as effectively as possible. It must be emphasised that using defective sight does not cause further deterioration. Neither does it harm the eyes to bring material close for reading - in fact, this is the most natural form of magnification.

When you work with a visually impaired child, you must always bear the following points in mind.

When you are using the *chalkboard/whiteboard* you should speak clearly as you write.

You should allow the child *extra time* for *copying* from the board or desk copy of boardwork.

Keep the board *clean and clear*.

Contrast and *clarity* are both important when you are teaching visually impaired children—therefore, you need to use a pen or chalk with a good contrast, and always use a top-to-bottom listing system.

Use *newsprint* paper—available from most art suppliers—both *in place of* chalkboard work and for *handouts* to the children.

You should provide *clearly lined paper* when you ask the child to write neatly on lines.

When you are using *duplicated* material, make sure that a child with visual difficulties has a *good copy*, with clear contrast and adequate spacing.

To avoid bad posture, use tables with sloping surfaces, which can be adjusted to different heights or a workboard.

Remember that bringing work close to the eye causes no harm—it is a natural form of magnification.

Lighting should not *dazzle*—rather, it should be helpful to the child.

If extra lighting is needed a lamp should be placed to the *rear* of the child.

An *orderly environment* is most important.

Equipment should have a '*home*', where it is always replaced.

The child should be *shown changes* in classroom furniture.

Doors and windows should be either fully open or completely closed, since half-opened windows and doors can cause accidents. Make sure that all glass screens are clean.

Make sure you have the child's *full attention* before giving instructions

Before you ask a visually impaired child to copy work off the board, make sure they can see it by asking them to *read it aloud* (not in whole group situations).

Never ask a visually impaired child to *share books*.

Work cards should have *strong colour contrasts*.

Don't cover the cards with perspex—this can create distracting glare and highlights.

Avoid using *tracing paper* or *line guides*.

Use books and worksheets with *good sized, clear print* which is *well spaced*.