

Guidelines for Teachers

Many visual problems are not detected by traditional screening methods. In children visual defects often express themselves more as poor coordination, various forms of awkwardness and learning problems, than as defective vision.

Informed teachers and nursery nurses, by observing children's classroom behaviour and performance, prove to be more effective in detecting visual problems than the distance acuity charts (Snellen), which form the basis of traditional vision screening. This is because the teacher and nursery nurse, more than any other person, sees the child in a learning situation trying to achieve.

The following give some idea of symptoms to look for:

Does the child:

- Have a tendency to peer closely at objects or pictures, or hold work at an unusual angle.
- Avoid close work.
- Fail to make and maintain eye contact.
- Adopt abnormal head postures.
- Have difficulty finding dropped items.
- Bump into things or knock things over.
- Have difficulty finding all the text on a page.
- Lose the place or skip lines when reading.
- Close or cover one eye when reading or doing near work.
- Have poor hand control.
- Confuse similar words or fail to recognise the same word in a different context.
- Have a short attention span.
- Rub its eyes frequently.
- Miss the target when placing items or throwing balls.
- Visit the Eye Hospital, Orthoptist or Optician.

If three or more of these items apply, the child may well have a significant visual problem, which can seriously delay the child's educational progress. Early diagnosis and thoughtful educational strategies will help the child, not merely to cope, but to progress at the same rate as their peer group.