

Supporting the inclusion of children and young people with visual impairment

Top Access Tips: Access to Literacy

Print access

- ◆ Ensure print materials are available in child's preferred access method
- ◆ Plan ahead to ensure this is possible
- ◆ Use Typoscope or black line marker to keep place in the text
- ◆ Provide training, to develop the technique of moving the marker across the line and down the page of text
- ◆ Use screen magnifier, scan book into computer, use LVA or CCTV
- ◆ Read aloud to child
- ◆ Use DVD or CD to enable child to listen to the story independently
- ◆ Facilitate rest breaks to manage visual fatigue

Reading Environment—Position of Book

Suggestions: May be helped by the use of a: **Sloped board or a Reading Stand**

Let child find best viewing position, then assess, working to make that position more comfortable by using a sloped desk, a reading stand, by tucking the chair nearer the table, by using a different chair, by putting a cushion underneath them or by raising the reading stand with a book underneath.

Development of Visual Perception Skills

Child may need training in the area of visual perception skills, due to their visual condition causing limited development in the area of visual perception abilities. Not all children will have sufficient vision to develop these skills to maximum efficiency without training, which can help them to use their remaining vision more efficiently. E.g.: Adequate hand-eye co-ordination is essential for both reading and writing. Figure background perception is the ability to select a symbol, figure word or phrase from its background necessary for word attack skills, reading ability and research techniques. The ability to perceive shape and size is necessary if the child is to recognise known words in different colours, sizes, typefaces, set also in unfamiliar contexts.

Position in space and spatial relationships are an important perceptual ability to the discrimination of letters having similar form but different positions e.g. p and q, d and b. Also important to the ability to distinguish the sequence of letters in a word, or words in a sentence.

Child requires scanning, tracking and locating skills to read fluently. Child may require a specific planned targeted intervention to support efficient use of the vision they have.

In the early years setting or foundation stage

- ◆ Use large clear letter shapes
- ◆ Writing in the sand, tracing letters, use of magnetic letters, 3D letter shapes, pipe cleaners, wiiki stix, modelling dough, tactile surfaces with the letters positioned on them
- ◆ Hand over hand modelling. Use of stencils with a brightly coloured dot to indicate the starting point
- ◆ Clear, block outlines that the child can trace between the lines
- ◆ Support understanding of concepts and the written word with concrete experience, story bags, real experience, using touch, smell, taste, listening opportunities to enrich access

Phonics

Phonics can be learnt in line with the class, but supported through one to one additional sessions if necessary. Provide real objects to support understanding of sounds. Make a phonic picture book, make phonic boxes containing objects and phonic cards to match sounds to objects.

Understanding the story

If working with a young child, introduce objects or representations of the characters in the book, or items that represent parts of the story.

Use flash cards and introduce characters, such as Chip, Biff, and how they fit together as a family. Use clearly adapted pictures with their names on separate cards and play games of matching the names to the pictures.

Spelling

Child may struggle due to being unable to see whole word or words incidentally around them. The lack of incidental exposure to print may mean it takes them more effort to learn correct spellings in the first place.

Spelling can also be a learning issue for a blind child using contracted Braille, where whole words or letter combinations may be represented by single Braille characters. A child doing spellings in grade 2 Braille would also need to learn them in grade 1. It is important to ensure knowledge of spelling the word out in un-contracted Braille is secure.

Punctuation

Punctuation is reinforced through reading, so this also may be an area needing additional attention, ensuring adaptations are clear and well contrasting.

Access to non-fiction books

Difficulty in accessing large range of non-fiction books. Use of support assistant, to work under direction of child. Child needs to develop the skill of researching, thinking of headings that information may be found under, understanding ways in which information is classified. Assistant may read or transpose information into large print or Braille Use of CCTV, LVA, Internet and scanner to aid independent research.

Speaking and Listening

Child needs support to develop listening skills from an early age as this will be an important part of accessing the curriculum. Sometimes the child may prefer to listen rather than read, or speak rather than write.

- ◆ May miss non verbal gestures, and body language and the messages they convey during conversation.
- ◆ May misinterpret information as a result, or be unaware of certain elements in a conversation unless clarification is given. Equally may need to support child with an understanding of their own facial expression and body language.
- ◆ May need to explain or interpret the child's body language or facial expression.
- ◆ Address all learners by name helps child to keep track of who is speaking and when to speak.

Oral Reading Activities

Helpful if the child is given advance notice so that cues can be selected, highlighted and the dialogue looked at and practiced beforehand with the child. The child is then able to focus more on expression and meaning and not on the mechanics of accessing the text.

Comprehension

Position the questions first and then the passage, so that the child reads the passage with a view to answering the questions.

Or, split the passage in half, with two questions at the beginning, followed by the portion of text containing the answers to those two questions, followed by the remaining questions and the rest of the text.

Creative writing

Most children start to tell or write stories based on their own experience or their imagination.

Children with severe visual impairment may have less material to draw on to construct these stories, because their own experiences may have been limited. They may need support in developing creative ideas.

Teaching Braille (See notes on Towards Reading Readiness for Braille)

Teach and develop knowledge of Braille Alphabet linked to the child's learning Dispositions (See notes on Towards Reading Readiness for Braille), then with this secure knowledge in place the child can be included in class phonic work activities. Using real objects will enhance and support the teaching and learning of phonics, making sure child knows what the words mean to start with and by placing them in the context of an activity if need be. Examples: Fan and pan, Pen and hen, Fig and dig , Log and cog. Use Braille clip together letters (available from the RNIB) to support the teaching of phonics. Make phonic boxes and matching phonic cards to practice and reinforce knowledge.

Hands On

Hands On is designed for a young child who is beginning to learn to read through contracted Braille, and who has acquired pre-Braille skills. This brand new resource introduces the Braille alphabet, alphabetic word signs, numbers 1 -10 and some punctuation marks and short forms through a phonetic reading scheme.

Divided into five levels, Hands On includes practice books, a booklet of fun activities and several real stories at each level. The whole scheme includes simple tactile pictures and puzzles to enliven the reading material.

It is linked as closely as possible with the Letters and Sounds framework, whilst not compromising the need to keep tactually confusing Braille signs apart.

Take Off Braille Reading Scheme

The course takes the learner who has completed 'Hands On' to the end of the contracted Braille code and has been produced in consultation with the VIEW Children's Braille Committee.

Abi Books

Humorous stories featuring the adventures of a young blind girl. This scheme is for young readers who have completed 'Hands On'. They introduce additional Braille signs and a print version of the text appears on facing page to encourage shared reading between sighted and touch readers.

Reading Ability Assessment

The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA) is available in Braille from RNIB as an individual test of reading, accuracy, comprehension and rate of reading in blind children aged 5 to 18 reading contracted Braille. Advice is also available on how to use the standard version of the test with partially sighted children. NARA is both an attainment and diagnostic test that can be used to monitor progress in reading and to identify particular needs so that appropriate teaching programmes can be implemented.

Learning Media Assessment

A guide to help assess, evaluate and put in place appropriate teaching methods and literacy formats to support children in their literacy development, written by Cay Holbrook. It is available in print or Braille from [Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

Spelling Dictionary

The Spelling dictionary for beginner writers (RNIB) (Key Stage 1 and early Stage 2). In addition to a word list containing most of the words young writers are likely to use, there is a mini thesaurus giving synonyms for common words such as "then", "said" and "went". Also includes theme word lists, covering colours, school, home, geography, sports, astronomy/space, holidays and weather. Each word is shown in un-contracted Braille (and contracted equivalent if applicable), and in 18 point print. For words which sound the same but have different meanings – such as where and wear, sore and saw – a brief explanation or example is given in brackets.