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Date:

Dear XXXXXXX,

# Effective Practice Guide

**What to look for in an early years setting**

**About this guide**

This guide gives advice about choosing a setting for a child. This is an important decision, especially if a child is blind or partially sighted. This guide outlines some things that you may want to look for when you visit a setting. It is important to remember that lots of things that a child may want can easily be put in place if parents, specialist teachers and the setting are happy to work together.

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**1. Features of a good setting**

What should you be looking for? What will help a child to settle more easily into a setting?

A setting that provides a supportive and stimulating environment for all children will be well on the way to providing what a child with vision impairment needs.

A good setting is one where:

* the adults involve parents in their children's learning.
* the adults in the setting use supportive, descriptive language and give clear explanations when they talk to children.
* resources and materials are carefully chosen to take account of issues such as contrast, size, and information through touch.
* resources match the needs and interests of the children and are organised to encourage the children's independence.
* the environment has a consistent layout with clear routes and areas of learning (including access to toilets, coat pegs and trays) which are obvious to the children.
* there are touch or sound cues to help the children know where they are (this might be something that needs to be added for a child with vision impairment).
* opportunities are given for children to be in small groups with a good adult/child ratio, which encourages children to play together.
* if the adult is leading, the child is clear on the purpose of the activity, and when it starts and finishes.
* the adults encourage the child to make their choice of activities, letting them know what is available in the setting both indoors and outdoors.
* the adults allow the children extra time for exploration and to repeat experiences or activities if they want.
* daily routines are consistent and predictable; are meaningful to the children, and allow them to anticipate what is going to happen next.
* there is clear planning for activities such as snack times and toileting, which encourages the children's confidence and independence.

**2. Specialist advice**

A Qualified Teacher of Children with Vision Impairment (QTVI) has a key role to play in supporting parents and settings. Sometimes, if they are working with a parent and their child in the home, they may be able to visit a setting with the parent. Part of their role is giving advice and support to any setting where there is a child with a vision impairment.

If you are not in touch with a specialist teacher already, contact RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999 or email [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk) for the name and contact details of someone in your area.

**3. What does the child think?**

Don't forget, a child may also have views on the setting they would like to be in! These are some of the things a child might want to say to the adults and other children in their setting.

Please remember…

I would like to have the opportunity for the same experiences as everyone else, and for you to treat me like everyone else with the same expectations, but:

I have to work harder on visual activities, so I may get tired

I may see less well in bright or dim light

I may see less if I am worried or ill

I may not see body language

I may not see facial expressions.

Please help me by using…

my name before giving me instructions

the names of the other children so that I know who you are talking to

curtains/blinds to control light from outside coming through the windows

bright clear colours in resources and displays

activities which use all the senses, such as touch and sound as well as vision.

Please will you give me…

posters/pictures/displays at my eye level that I can also touch

individual demonstrations, such as actions for rhymes

clear verbal instructions

explanations for unexpected noises

real objects to play with

resources that are organised so that I can try activities on my own

warning if routines are going to change in any way

help to make friends.

Please let me…

tilt my head if it helps me to see better

go as close to things as I need to (this will not damage my eyes)

have extra time for activities

sit close to you when you talk to the whole group

hold objects and books myself

have time to learn the layout of the inside and outside areas

look at the story book first to know what it is about before you read it to the group

let me touch/explore new things

move before or after the rest of the group if this makes it easier for me to begin with, or buddy with another child to move around with the group

have my tray and peg at the beginning or end of a row, and mark it clearly with something I understand.

**For further information about RNIB**

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) provide a range of services to support children with vision impairment, their families and the professionals who work with them.

RNIB Helpline can refer you to specialists for further advice and guidance relating to your situation. RNIB Helpline can also help you by providing information and advice on a range of topics, such as eye health, the latest products, leisure opportunities, benefits advice and emotional support.

Call the Helpline team on 0303 123 9999 or email RNIB’s CYPF Mailbox: cypf@rnib.org.uk

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