



Focus on foundation

Including children who are blind or partially sighted in early years settings

RNIB

supporting blind and
partially sighted people

Third edition

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foundation

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partially sighted in early years settings

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This book combines the ideas and expertise of many early years practitioners and qualified teachers of children with vision impairment. Our thanks are due to colleagues who worked at Shawgrove School, Manchester Service for visually impaired children and students and Longhurst Day Nursery, Manchester. Their work inspired three previous popular RNIB publications for early years practitioners and continues to inform the good practice in this book.

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And finally thanks go to all who offered the learning stories and practical ideas for a revised version, in particular to Peter Lumley, Linda Hubbard, Graeme Douglas and Mike McLinden for their permission to reprint their articles.

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Introduction

Focus on foundation offers practical ideas for the successful inclusion of children with sight loss in early years settings including reception classes. It describes how a child with a vision impairment can take a full part in play and learning alongside children who are fully sighted. It is written for all who work in early years settings such as nurseries, reception classes, children's centres, playgroups, and out of school clubs. It may also be of interest to childminders welcoming a child with sight problems into their home.

It brings together advice and practical suggestions from specialist teachers of children with vision impairment. They work as visiting and support teachers in local authorities or in special schools. Many of these specialist teachers are involved in home-based learning with children and their families at an early stage and are experienced in supporting children's transition into early years settings.

Focus on foundation is part of RNIB's early years series for parents and professionals working with blind and partially sighted children from birth to five years. It has been fully revised in October 2012 to reflect changes in early years provision in England through the Early Years Foundation Stage. For easy reference it closely follows the format of the Early Years Foundation Stage and endorses the principles for early years learning and development.

We hope you find it helpful to you in your work... and play!

Please note: Throughout the book we use different terms to refer to children who are blind or partially sighted, such as children with a vision impairment or sight problems. All references should be taken to mean that the child has a visual condition which requires special arrangements to be made to enable access to the physical environment or learning activities.

What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

A child's early years are remarkable because of the challenge and variety of learning experiences and how quickly they make sense of these and use and develop their new skills.

An early years setting can provide a stimulating environment which enriches learning and development and gives a child the fun and satisfaction of being part of a group.

This initial experience of mixing with their sighted peers provides an excellent foundation for children, wherever they may continue their education. Most blind and partially sighted children in the UK now attend a local school.

The Early Years Foundation Stage, or EYFS provides a single learning framework for all young children from birth to five years in England. In September 2008 the EYFS became compulsory for all early years settings that have to register with Ofsted – The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, which inspects and regulates care and education for children and young people in England.

The Department for Education revised the EYFS in 2012. The new framework sets out seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

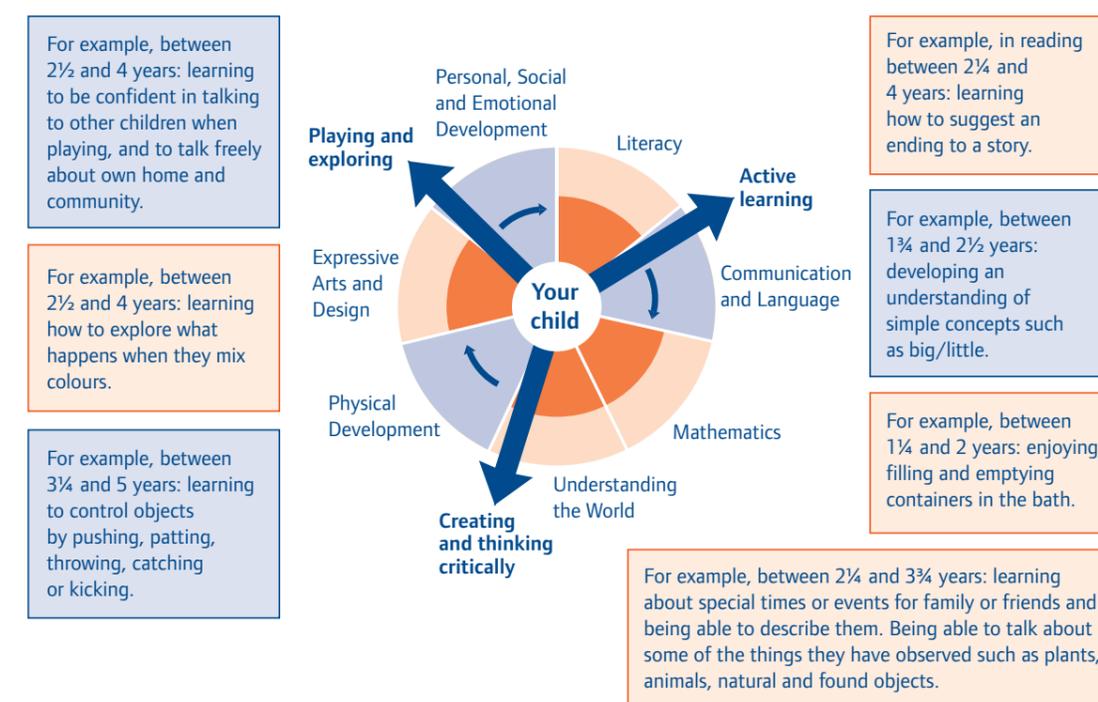
Three prime areas of learning and development

Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, known as the prime areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

Examples of the areas of learning and development with links between the way in which your child learns and what they learn

The diagram below gives examples of the areas of learning and development and shows the links between the way in which your child learns and what they learn.



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Four specific areas of learning and development

Early years providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy;
- mathematics;
- understanding the world; and
- expressive arts and design.

The principles that underpin the EYFS

The EYFS states that four guiding principles should shape practice in early years settings. These are:

A unique child

Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

Positive relationships

Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.

Enabling environments

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers.

Learning and development

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Inclusive practice

Diversity of individuals and communities should be valued and respected so that no child or family is discriminated against. Practitioners are asked to consider how a family arriving at the setting would know that all children are welcomed and valued.



Significant vision impairment in children is very rare. It is probable that many adults working in early years settings have never met a blind or partially sighted child before.

The principles underpinning the EYFS apply to all children, but their interpretation for children with a vision impairment needs to be considered.

In some cases children who have impaired vision will be entitled to additional staff support, provided by their local authority.

It is important to identify any need for additional support as early as possible. Without it, children will not get the help they require at the right time and in the way that is right for them. Early support for children includes listening to families and taking part in a sensitive two-way exchange of information. Knowing when and how to call in specialist help is one important element of inclusive practice.

For more information about this, please contact your local authority service for children with a vision impairment. Our Helpline can provide you with the name and address of your local authority teacher for visually impaired children.

Understanding vision impairment

In order to be able to see, three things need to work properly: the eye, the optic nerve, and the brain. Damage to any of these can cause a vision impairment. Sight continues to develop after birth and vision must be stimulated (used) to reach its full useful potential.

Vision impairment refers to a range of sight problems from mild to severe to total loss of sight. For educational purposes, a child is considered to have a vision impairment if special arrangements are required to enable access to the physical environment or to enable a child to take a full part in the curriculum (the learning activities). Children whose vision is fully corrected by spectacles or contact lenses would not be included in this group.

A child who is blind usually requires strategies for learning which do not rely on vision, for example tactile means such as braille, or audio methods. Other children who may be described as partially sighted may have sight difficulties that affect their ability to see fine detail either with near or distance vision. Some children have difficulty seeing objects on the periphery of their vision, which may mean that they don't see things presented on one side, or on the floor or up high. For some children detecting and judging movement and speed is an issue, and some cannot see 3-D depth (steps might look like flat stripes).

For many children, size, colour, contrast, position and lighting make a big difference to what they can see. Some children's eyes work perfectly but their optic nerve can interrupt or confuse the messages sent to their brain, and they receive an incomplete confusing picture. These children have very significant visual processing difficulties which can have a big impact on learning.

Children with sight problems may use enlarged or modified print or a mixture of visual, audio and tactile learning methods depending on the task.

Each visual condition, such as cataracts or nystagmus for example, will affect vision in different ways, and the individual characteristics of each child means that the way they use this vision will vary greatly. Many children with sight problems also have other disabilities or health issues that impact on their learning.

Key things to remember

- Support and advice should be obtained from the local authority Visual Impairment Service.
- The child is first and foremost a child whose development will be individual no matter what level of vision impairment.
- Vision is the major source of information. It stimulates curiosity, integrates information and invites exploration.
- Higher skills in the use of the other senses do not automatically develop to compensate for the lack of sight. They develop through experience, practice and supported learning.
- Learning through senses other than vision can be slower and may be incomplete; it cannot always provide all the necessary information in order to ensure an accurate understanding of people, places and objects in the child's environment.
- Lack of sight can have a profound effect on the child's ability to interact socially. Social clues such as body language, gesture, eye contact, or facial expressions may be missed or misunderstood, and alternative ways of reading other people's feelings and non-verbal communication needs to be actively taught.
- A child's confidence is influenced by their ability to be independent in both their learning and in everyday routines.

If you have been given a diagnosis of the condition affecting a child's vision you may like to find out more about it. Here are some sources of information to get you started:

- **www.viscotland.org.uk** is a website with explanations of medical information about vision impairment written specifically for parents. It includes contact details for support groups for people who have particular eye conditions such as albinism, retinoblastoma, nystagmus or retinitis pigmentosa, and for their families.
- The eye health section of our website has an A-Z of eye conditions. It includes a page on rare eye conditions with links to groups who are specialists in supporting people with specific conditions. Visit **www.rnib.org.uk/eyeconditions**
- Contact a Family is a national organisation offering support and advice to families of children with disabilities, whatever their medical condition. Their website **www.cafamily.org.uk** has an A-Z list of specific conditions and rare disorders, and details of support groups.

Getting ready

Preparation

For a child who is blind or partially sighted to benefit fully from early years provision, the child, parents, staff and parents of other children in the group all need to be positive about the placement. It is essential that there is thorough discussion beforehand and consultation with a qualified teacher of visually impaired children, in order to discuss any worries or anticipated difficulties. The continued availability of support from a qualified teacher of visually impaired children is important for maintaining confidence and helping to find solutions to any difficulties that might arise.

A teacher of children with a vision impairment can discuss the group's routine with the family, and can talk about the general implications of vision impairment with the early years practitioners, as well as the specific requirements of the child.

Following discussion with all the adults involved, the introduction to the group of a child who has a vision impairment needs to be carefully prepared and sensitively managed, and the needs of the child explored.

Early years practitioners should be reassured that they do not need to make any major changes in the structure or organisation of the group. At this early stage the education provision should be suitable for both children who have a vision impairment and children who are fully sighted, although there will be some need for minor adjustments in presentation and emphasis.

The first few days

Some children take to new surroundings better than others do. It is a good idea for one or both parents to accompany the child on several short visits first, until the child is familiar with the new surroundings and confident within them.

The child can explore the building and meet the staff and other children, while still being reassured by a parent's presence. During these visits, parents and early years practitioners can take turns either observing or playing with the child. This will help to build up a picture of what help, if any, the child needs for different activities.

As much information as possible should be gathered from parents and from medical sources with parental permission, as well as by observation. Early years practitioners need to know whether a child should wear glasses, contact lenses or an eye patch and if so, when and for how long. It is also important to know how much and how far a child can see and the best working conditions to enable the child to play and explore successfully. For example colour contrast and lighting may be especially important.

A child who has no useful vision needs and enjoys the same activities as other children. The only difference is that a little more care is needed to provide a safe but non-restrictive environment. A child with little or no sight should not be expected to cope with too many new voices and people, or too much unfamiliar space all at once. While a sighted child will continuously gaze around to check and gradually absorb new surroundings, a child who is unable to sort things out visually may find a radical change in environment too much to cope with all at once. It would be unreasonable, though, to expect the other children in a group to stop their play or restrict their movements in order to make things easier for one particular child, although there may be specific occasions where this is necessary.

You can try...

To help a child with a vision impairment gradually feel at home in a new environment we recommend a tried and tested strategy. This is to turn one area of the room into a quiet home corner which initially could be bounded by the backs of cupboards or other solid furniture and with a sturdy removable barrier at the entrance. The blind child can explore and feel secure in this area first. This area made of the normal furniture can be gradually expanded. Initially, the other children can visit the corner in ones and twos.

The safe corner has the added benefit of keeping some familiar toys within easy reach and providing a place out of the general traffic where hanging toys and musical mobiles can be placed. Gradually the child will want to invite more children into the area and venture further and mix in the general play area. It is important to help the child learn key routes to enable them to build up a mental map of both the indoor and outdoor play areas. A daily tour ensures that a visually impaired child becomes more familiar with the environment and knows what is on offer.

Using children's names

Always use the child's name when you start to talk, and if the child doesn't yet recognise your voice say who you are too: "Hello Josh, it's Carol. I've come to play with the bricks too." Use the names of all the children when talking to them. That way a child with a vision impairment won't mistakenly act on an instruction or comment which was intended for another child. Tell the child when you are leaving and encourage the sighted children to do the same: "Josh, I'm going to the sandpit now." This helps a child with impaired vision to keep track of staff and friends.

Safety

All the usual safety considerations for young children apply, for example, guarding plugs and wires and hot radiators, supervising children on climbing frames and slides, and keeping doors onto the street shut. In addition there are a few things which need extra thought when a child with impaired vision is part of the group. Doors are a particular hazard because a blind or partially sighted child could walk into the edge of a half open door, or trap fingers in the hinge while feeling the way round. This can be avoided by keeping doors either wedged fully open or firmly shut.

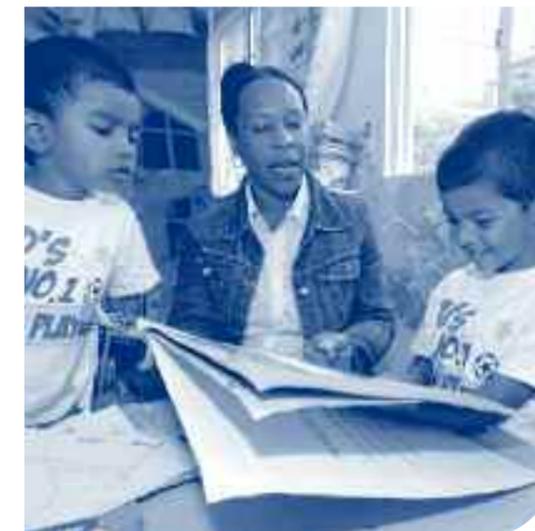
Objects scattered about the floor are another hazard. To some extent this is unavoidable and a blind child must learn to feel with hands and toes for obstacles. However the staff can be on the lookout for potential dangers and all the children will benefit by learning not to throw toys about and to put them back after playing with them.

In general, the standard of supervision in most registered settings is high and as suitable for a child with a vision impairment as for sighted children.



Key things to remember

- Always use the child's name first to gain attention.
- Children with a vision impairment respond better within a consistent routine in a well planned environment.
- Words describing visual functions should be used routinely, for example "Look at me" "Shall we see if there are any bigger bricks?"
- Opportunities for spontaneous play with sensitive support will be an essential way of learning for a young child with vision impairment.
- Take account of the child's individual needs regarding lighting and sound levels as advised by a qualified teacher of visually impaired children.
- The early years setting is likely to be an unfamiliar environment to a new child. The child will need to build up their own mental map at their own pace. Build confidence and understanding by:
 - providing a quiet home-base in the setting where the child feels safe
 - encouraging the child to move out from there when ready, learning key routes
 - showing the child what is available within the setting on a daily basis
 - encouraging the child to have a go at something new and build on success
 - actively and confidently exploring the inside and outside areas.



"Use the names of all the children when talking to them. That way a child with a vision impairment won't mistakenly act on an instruction or comment which was intended for another child"

Play and active learning

The play needs of a child who is blind or partially sighted are essentially the same as those of a sighted child and should follow the same developmental pattern, even where development is delayed. However the ways in which development presents itself can be different. For example some children with a vision impairment may use and play with language rather than objects initially in their imaginative play. Some miniature plastic toys may hold little meaning initially for a child who is blind as by touch they bear little resemblance to the feel, weight and texture of the real thing.

Early years practitioners are well trained in the principles of play and need have no fears that anything out of the ordinary is required for a child who has impaired vision.

Key things to remember

- Toys and play materials are an important way of enabling children to discover a variety of sensory experiences.
- Give children plenty of time to explore new things.
- All children need opportunities to experience challenge, risk and excitement in a way that is appropriate for them.
- It is essential to watch and listen to a child's reactions to work out what stimulates and interests them and what they enjoy.
- Children need to be alert to play and enjoy new things. If they are tired or unwell try less demanding or familiar activities.
- Children depend on a sensitive play partner to encourage, support and extend their play with objects – and to know when to withdraw!
- Talk to the child's specialist teacher for children with vision impairment about colour, contrast, lighting, and using plain backgrounds. Try to find out if the child sees better on one side, or if objects should be presented in a particular position.
- Make sure that the child is in the most suitable position to use their hands and eyes to best advantage, whether seated, standing or lying.
- Define and limit the play space around the child to create a "den" or secure familiar base to play.

- Keep toys within easy reach so that the child's movements can create an effect. For example, suspend toys above children lying down, or use a container to keep objects together on a table top.
- If objects roll out of reach, try to take the child to the object, rather than bringing the object back to the child.
- Allow a child to explore objects with their mouth and feet, as well as encouraging the use of hands.
- Use language that is simple, short and descriptive and relates to what the child is doing.
- All children need opportunities to explore and play outdoors and some may need encouragement to do so.

Play materials

Special toys are not essential, although we may see a difference in the way that a child with impaired vision handles materials. Some things may need more adaptation for a totally blind child than for a child who has partial sight, but all children need to have opportunities to learn through play. We have teamed up with The British Toy & Hobby Association (BTHA) to produce a leaflet on toys and play for children who are blind and partially sighted. The leaflet which can be downloaded for free from www.rnib.org.uk/earlyyearslearning provides information on choosing the right toys, creating a play environment, growing through different types of play and top tips for extending a child's play environment. Our Online shop has a great range of toys and games suitable for children with a vision impairment. (see Resources page 54).

Sound provides the motivation for a totally blind baby to reach out and search for an object. Sound and touch continue to be the dominant interest in later play and exploration for a child who is blind, whereas a child who has partial sight may enjoy the added stimulus of bright colour. For both blind and partially sighted children, play materials need to be accessible until they have learnt to search for and find them.

Children with little or no vision have to make better use of the other senses in order to explore and understand, so they may find different attributes of a toy or object interesting. Children with a vision impairment tend to continue longer than others to explore objects with their mouths or by tapping and banging.

The preferences of a child who has a vision impairment can be surprising for adults. For instance, many prefer firm, hard objects to soft woolly or spongy

toys, and often initially dislike sand, water and sticky substances. Depending on the type of vision impairment, a child may ignore small objects or take the brightest ones. Additional advice about choosing play materials can be sought from a qualified teacher of visually impaired children. Blind and partially sighted children may play with toys in ways not envisaged by their designers, as they will explore them more by touch than by sight. A toy car may interest a blind child for the way its wheels spin under the hands rather than for the way it travels across the floor. To a blind child, a doll's house will be experienced as a wooden or plastic box with interesting flaps and holes in it, rather than as a miniature version of a home.

Miniature houses or animals do look something like the real thing, but they feel quite different – so it is very difficult for blind children, who mainly use touch, to use toys in their early pretend play. Later in their lives, blind children will be able to connect the miniature in their minds with its full size counterpart. For this reason it is a good idea to let a blind child handle and talk about as many manageable real things as possible; then the toy versions may be used in whatever way interests the child at that time.

A child who has partial sight will probably use play materials in the same way as sighted children but may have trouble relocating them if they roll away. It may help to provide boundaries such as a tray or table with a rim. You can also paint the edges of a posting box or inset board with felt tip pens to make the shape easier to see.

Choosing toys – key things to remember:

- good colour and tone contrast
- any lettering is bold and clear
- reflects light or is fluorescent
- encourages children to use their eyes to follow an object
- encourages development of hand-eye co-ordination
- encourages good co-ordination of hands, using both hands together
- encourages development of fine finger control
- has an interesting texture offering some variety to touch
- has moving parts
- discrete pieces can be discriminated by touch
- switches are recognisable by touch as on or off, and click when operated

- encourages understanding of cause and effect
- makes a sound or other cue to an action having occurred
- encourages physical play, for example running, jumping
- encourages development of sense of smell.

Everyday items

Children learn best through the first-hand experiences that they have in their play. As well as toys, real objects and home-made equipment encourage play and exploration, providing a rich variety of materials that offer open ended opportunities for play.

Outdoor play

Outdoor play and physical activities are essential for all children and are vital for encouraging good muscular development in children who have a severe vision impairment, and laying the foundation for later confidence in independent travel. See Physical development on page 24.

You can try...

You can make a Treasure Basket for a baby cheaply and easily. It is a shallow sturdy basket containing a collection of everyday items, none of which are plastic! Most of the items you can find around the setting and are made of natural materials, such as a bunch of keys, paper, ribbons, a wooden egg cup or a lemon. These everyday items vary in weight, size, texture, colour, smell, taste, temperature and sound. Objects used in the basket should be washable, disposable or replaceable! Children explore the Treasure Basket using all their senses to discover what an object is, what it is like, and what it can do. Get to know the child by watching them and experiment with what they like and dislike in their Treasure Basket. For more information, visit www.rnib.org.uk/earlyyearslearning

For older children, try Pandora's suitcase. Fill a suitcase with carefully chosen real objects. For example wellington boots, wooden spoons, nylon pan cleaner, bicycle pump, balls of different textures and sizes, a hairbrush, comb, tea strainer, slippers, velcro, ribbon, sequined material, leather purse, handbag and so on. Children will love rummaging through the suitcase. Staff can encourage lots of discussion about each object, for example what it feels like, what it does, what it is made of and so on.

Assessment

Lack of sight or very poor vision can, but does not always, delay a child's development and it is vital that a child with impaired vision is given adequate stimulation and opportunity for play. Some children with a severe vision impairment may need many more repetitions of learning experiences and a longer time to learn. Practitioners can help by being open and curious about children's play.

Observing children closely will enable practitioners to gather information about what children know and understand, what they are able to do and what their interests are. Using their observations, practitioners will be able to support and extend the child's learning by planning for the next steps. But practitioners may need to cue in to the learning style of a child with vision impairment to gather and analyse this evidence.

Some signs of development may be missed because they present differently; for instance, the early stage of pretend play may manifest itself in sounds or words rather than in the manipulation of objects. Blind and partially sighted children follow the same developmental path as other children do although they may show it in different ways and sometimes slightly different ways to help them have to be found. A good early years setting can provide a child who has impaired vision with space, stimulation, company and new challenges.

Early years practitioners should have access to a qualified teacher of visually impaired children for specialist advice on understanding play and the adaptation of play materials and on management of the environment. Good cooperation between education, health and social care services should result in referrals being made, but sometimes parents or an individual professional may make an approach to get the ball rolling.

Assessment in the EYFS

A starting point for all assessment should be an acknowledgement that parents know their child best. Parents are their child's first and most enduring educator, with in-depth knowledge of their physical, emotional



and language development over time. This knowledge should be reflected in all assessments. While practitioners observe the interests, achievements and actions of children throughout the EYFS and share this with parents, there are two specific opportunities to talk to parents about how their child is developing.

EYFS Progress Check at age two

The Early Years Foundation Stage requires that, when a child is aged between 24–36 months, parents and carers must be supplied with a short written summary of their child's development in the three prime learning and development areas of the EYFS:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

The aims of the progress check are to ensure that parents have a clear picture of their child's development and to enable parents to understand their child's needs and, with support from practitioners, support their development at home.

EYFS Profile

In addition, all early years providers must complete an EYFS Profile for each child in the final term of the academic year in which they reach the age of five – for most children this is the reception year in primary school. The profile describes a child's level of attainment at the end of the EYFS in all areas of learning and identifies their learning needs for the next stage of school, helping Year 1 teachers plan an effective and appropriate curriculum for the child.

If a child has a vision impairment a qualified teacher of visually impaired children should be involved in the assessment. They can offer specialist knowledge of the different ways that children with a vision impairment sometimes demonstrate their development. The early years practitioner will make a judgement on how a child is progressing on the 17 goals of the EYFS. It is good practice for the practitioner to meet with parents to talk through the report.

Complex pieces of legislation govern the support children with special educational needs and disabilities should receive and a special educational needs co-ordinator or SENCO will be able to advise, in partnership with the

parents. Current regulations require advice from a qualified teacher of visually impaired children to be contributed to a formal assessment for a Statement of special educational needs (or education, health and care plan). Not all children with a vision impairment will need a Statement or Plan, but all children with impaired vision should have their needs assessed by a qualified teacher of visually impaired children.



You can find more information about assessment of a child's educational needs on our website at www.rnib.org.uk/childassessment

Each child with impaired vision is unique and has an individual personality. The ultimate goal is that all children achieve their full potential and independence alongside their friends throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Seven areas of learning and development

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets out seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and interconnected.

Three prime areas

Three areas of learning are vital for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive. These three areas, known as the prime areas, are:

- communication and language;
- physical development; and
- personal, social and emotional development.

Practitioners must consider each child's needs, interests and stage of development and use this to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience in all of the areas of learning and development. Practitioners working with the youngest children are expected to focus on the three prime areas, which are the basis for successful learning in the other four specific areas.

If a child's progress in any prime area gives cause for concern, practitioners must discuss this with the child's parents and/or carers and agree how to support the child. Practitioners must consider whether a child may have a special educational need or disability which requires specialist support. They should link with, and help families to access, relevant services from other agencies.

Four specific areas

Early years providers must also support children in four specific areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:

- literacy;
- mathematics;
- understanding the world; and
- expressive arts and design.

We will now look at each area in turn.

Communication and language

This area of learning is made up of:

- listening and attention;
- understanding; and
- speaking.

Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.

But what does this mean if a child has a vision impairment?

This is a key area where advice from a qualified teacher of visually impaired children (QTVI) is essential. The verbal skills of a child with a vision impairment may need extra practical activities to ensure that the underpinning concepts are based on sound understanding. Lots of “hands on” is good!

Key things to remember

- To become skilful communicators, babies and young children need to be with people with whom they have warm and loving relationships.
- Babies respond differently to different sounds and from an early age use their voices to make contact and to let people know what they need and how they feel.
- All children learn best through activities and experiences that engage all the senses.
- Link language with physical movement and real objects in action songs and rhymes, role-play and practical experiences such as cookery or gardening.
- Provide opportunities for the child to ask questions to check understanding.
- Be specific in your use of language, giving clear descriptions or instructions.
- At story time try to choose books which mention sounds, or encourage staff to add their own sound effects or voices.



- For younger children, direct one-to-one conversations with an adult will be essential where talk and interaction are developed in a meaningful context.
- The child may need help to learn how to take turns in conversation, eg for older children in circle time. Use names.
- Extra effort may need to be made to ensure that the child is actively involved in whole group sessions. The child's most appropriate seating position in group sessions should be discussed with a qualified teacher of visually impaired children.
- Real objects and practical experiences or trips will extend the child's understanding of vocabulary.
- Some children may need extra encouragement to articulate their feelings and to respond appropriately to other children because they do not pick up on clues such as facial expression or body language.
- Role play depends on a true understanding of real life situations and therefore may need careful planning and structure.
- Actively introduce visual and spatial language to help a child who has a vision impairment to develop their understanding of colour, position, shape, size and distance.

You'll find more information about making listening to stories fun and engaging in the section on literacy on page 33.

You can try...

Encouraging communication

Communication for most people depends a good deal on non-verbal signals such as body language and facial expression. Much of this is missed by partially sighted children and is completely absent for blind children who are dependent on verbal communication or on actual physical contact. Adults need to provide a running commentary on the world or the child may feel confused or isolated. In a busy playgroup or nursery this commentary helps a child who is blind or partially sighted to make sense of sounds and activities. Sensitive commentary can also help children to become more aware of the emotional responses of the children and staff, and to develop empathy. A child with a vision impairment needs to hear language which is relevant to the actual situation – literal, immediate, describing what is happening at that moment, and preferably referring to things that the child can hear or feel. In this way the child will learn to connect experiences with the words that describe them.

It is better to avoid meaningless catchphrases or joking references to things or people who are not actually present such as “Where’s Daddy?” when he is not likely to appear. However, action songs, finger plays and nursery rhymes are very much enjoyed and understood by children as games.

Children with little or no sight often echo adult speech, partly in play and partly in an effort to respond to language only half understood. This “parroting” usually stops once the meaning of the words has been grasped. However it is worth remembering that repetitious speech is sometimes a form of play – mimicry or the beginning of pretend play.

Listening skills

Some children with a vision impairment are slow to develop speech. One possible reason for this is their need to listen constantly for clues and to gather information about what is going on. As soon as the child speaks, other sounds will be masked and contact lost. Blind children may often appear to be in a dreamworld when, in fact, they are listening acutely to the world around them.

“Action songs, finger plays and nursery rhymes are very much enjoyed and understood by children as games”

These listening skills can be encouraged in the nursery or playgroup. Teach children how to take turns in conversation, for instance in playing shops or telling home news, and how to identify sounds belonging to objects in everyday life. They can learn to enjoy joining in and listening to songs and stories and to identify objects from the sounds they make when handled.

Adult voices can also serve to let a child with impaired vision know where people are, near or far, and who they are. People should always speak to give warning of their approach and to identify themselves to a child who is blind. Many children with a vision impairment have difficulty recognising people’s faces or can only do so at a particular distance or when approached from a particular side. Partially sighted children may identify people by what they are wearing eg a bright coloured top and a blind child has to get to know different individuals by voice allied to touch (adults tolerate this better than children). Blind children may try to keep in contact or discover the presence of other people by calling out frequently and repetitively to get a response. This is their only way to be sure that someone is still there and to discover who it is.

Listening games

- With a small group of children, play listening games using recordings of everyday sounds or animal noises or sound lotto.
- Play listening and remembering games such as: I went to the playground and I said hello to: Marek, Holly, Sameera, Tom and...
- Sing action songs together. Children who have a vision impairment do not have the constant reinforcement of being able to see the other children’s actions clearly. If necessary a sighted adult can sit behind a child with impaired vision and help the child learn the actions.
- Play rhythm games with percussion instruments or hide the musical box.
- Encourage a child with impaired vision to stamp the floor or tap a wall to identify different surfaces. Wooden floors, carpets, kitchen tiles and tarmac all feel and sound different.

Physical development

Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

But what does this mean if a child has a vision impairment?

With the right support, most blind and partially sighted children can take part in a full range of physical activities such as climbing, running, balancing, pedalling, bouncing, ball skills, swimming and so on. However it is wise to seek advice from your teacher of visually impaired children or mobility specialist on some safety issues. For example high impact activities such as trampolining could cause further sight loss for children with certain eye conditions. If the child wears glasses, standard plastic lenses are routinely supplied; basic plastic lenses are resistant to accidental breakage, but would not give protection from a blow to the face. There is no such thing as an “unbreakable” or “shatterproof” lens!

Some children with sight problems have fewer natural opportunities at home to be physically active. This can be because of genuine parental concerns over safety or the need to have someone else around to ensure their safety for certain activities. Opportunities can be reduced simply because a busy parent finds it quicker to fetch something than to ask the child to run upstairs, find it and bring it. Early years settings can play an important role in making energetic movement fun and part of every day life. Using songs with lively actions can give everyone a wake up and a work out!

It is important to encourage every child to “get up and go” as much as they are able. You may need to work in partnership with a physiotherapist or occupational therapist if a child has additional needs to find the best ways of developing physical skills and fitness.

Healthy eating

To gain an understanding of different foods, a child with a vision impairment needs more opportunities to handle food and to experience and talk about how ingredients change when cooked or prepared.

Outdoor play

All children need opportunities to explore outdoors and some may need encouragement to do so. New mown grass, crispy autumn leaves, mud, water, snow, sand – all hold a wealth of experiences for children outdoors. Outdoor spaces offer different learning opportunities for children: play can be on a larger scale which encourages movement, and physical play can be more boisterous outdoors. Children will also encounter a wide range of plants and creatures to play with!

Outdoor and physical activities play an essential role in encouraging good muscular development in children who have a severe vision impairment, and lay the foundation for later confidence in independent travel.

Some children with a vision impairment may need help to gain sufficient confidence to play outside. When introducing a child who has a vision impairment to outdoor play, the company of a familiar adult gives a child security in this new environment and close contact may be needed until the child feels safe in open space. Often children want to explore the boundaries such as fences, gates or walls to give them a sense of the size and layout of the play space. Some children with impaired vision are particularly sensitive to sunlight and glare. They may need to wear tinted glasses outside and some benefit from wearing a sunhat to reduce glare, even in winter. Reducing glare can make a big difference to what children can see and to building their confidence and enjoyment outside.

A child with a vision impairment will gradually learn how to explore play equipment such as a climbing frame or a slide. An adult can give a verbal commentary to build confidence and some children may initially welcome physical guidance of their hands or feet. Different outdoor surfaces can help a child make sense of the outdoor space as they can tell the difference underfoot between the path and the softer texture under play equipment. However for some children with impaired vision uneven textures such as grass, gravel or sand may cause uncertainty and be unsettling, but these surfaces can also be very interesting because of the varied textures and the changing sounds that the child’s feet make on the different surfaces.

Key things to remember

- Build the child’s confidence to take manageable risks in their play in preparation for later life.
- Motivate the child to be active through praise, encouragement, and appropriate guidance.

- Watch for the child's natural movements through which they are finding out about their bodies and exploring sensations.
- Many movements or actions may need to be demonstrated and modelled for a child; build this into their play.
- Use precise and consistent instructions for directions, such as "Can you find the ball low down on your left?"
- Children need to develop an understanding of the position between different parts of the body, the position between the body and objects and between objects themselves.
- Swinging, sliding and being lifted up high, songs involving body parts, climbing and swimming all help to develop a child's understanding of position.
- Try to give opportunities for the child to move freely in a safe open space where they can experience speed and energy on their own.
- Make sure the child is familiar with changes in gradients, heights or floor textures when moving around, and that they know the layout of a new environment, drawing attention to any consistent sounds in the area such as a bubbling fish tank.
- Carefully chosen sound, textured, scented or highly visible clues can help a child who has impaired vision to move around the setting more confidently.
- Wind chimes on a door can help children to become aware that a door has opened, or to reason that "The door is behind me so the home corner is on my left."
- Different floor textures give extra clues. For example a reading corner may have carpet, the toilet floor tiles may be hard and cold to touch, and the sit and ride toys make a different sound on the wooden floor than they do outside on the playground or grass.
- A carved wooden shape at child height on a door can give extra clues. For example the kitchen door may have a wooden spoon on it, and the door to the toilets a tap.
- Strong, textured collages may be positioned at a child's handrail height. The child soon realises where the collage is in relation to other activity areas such as the craft or water-play area.
- Bright or white tape or paint can make the edges of tables and steps more visible.
- If there is an outdoor play area, help the child who has a vision impairment to recognise its features. For example work out with the child how many steps there are, if there is a drain cover on the path, or if there are trees marking the edge of the grass area. To begin with show the child the climbing frame or slide, and any walls or fences that a child can trail with a hand.

- When transferring between bright and dim conditions, some children need time to adapt to the new lighting environment.
- Many children who have a vision impairment ride tricycles safely with supervision.
- Alternatively a sighted child can give a friend with a vision impairment a "lift" in a trailer or pillion tricycle, again with close supervision.
- Ask your local authority for the support of a mobility specialist skilled in working with children with vision impairments, so that the child acquires the foundation skills for independent mobility.

You can try...

Using sound and tactile clues

Good listening skills are also important for direction finding and moving about safely and easily. A continuous sound clue (calling or clapping) should be given to show a blind child where the adult is and which directions to take. Long gaps between the sounds can cause a child to hesitate and lose the way. Once a child becomes familiar with the layout of rooms and names of landmarks, precise directions can be given; for instance say: "I'm by the sink" rather than "I'm here".

If a child is following a route independently, try not to distract them by talking to them; although this may seem the friendly thing to do, they may completely lose a sense of where they are which may damage their self-confidence.

Children who have a severe vision impairment sometimes disconcert adults by frequently calling out or by tapping walls and stamping their feet as they move around. Such actions are commonly used by children to examine and identify their surroundings and should not be unduly discouraged, as learning to recognise the resulting echoes is an important skill for moving about independently.

"A continuous sound clue (calling or clapping) should be given to show a blind child where the adult is and which directions to take"

It is very helpful to teach children to understand the terms left and right, up and down, in front and behind as early as possible for use in instructions and in locating lost objects.

Personal, social and emotional development

What is personal, social and emotional development? The EYFS framework says that children must be given experiences and support to help them to:

- develop a positive sense of themselves, and others;
- form positive relationships and develop respect for others;
- develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings;
- understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and
- have confidence in their own abilities.

But what does this mean if a child has a vision impairment?

This area of the curriculum is vital for all children. Children with sight problems may need to have some of the necessary skills and knowledge taught more specifically and directly, so that they gain a real understanding of self and of others. Above all it is important that approaches to learning are developed that encourage independence, self-reliance, confidence and a willingness to “have a go”.

Key things to remember

- Being special to someone and well cared for is vital to children’s physical, social and emotional health and well being.
- Children need adults to set a good example and to give them opportunities for interaction with the people they meet so that they can develop positive ideas about themselves and others.
- Support the development of independence skills, such as dressing and eating, particularly for children who are highly dependent on adult support for personal care.
- Keep a running commentary of what is happening to inform and reassure the child, particularly if you are doing something new.
- Allow the child to take responsibility as opportunities arise, for instance helping to feed the rabbits.
- Share positive images of children with a vision impairment through books and stories.

- Use the child’s name or gentle physical contact to replace the reassuring glance that reminds sighted children that they are being noticed and included.
- Accept that sometimes a child’s emotion and attention may be expressed differently but expect the same standards of behaviour as you would from other children.
- Try to distract a child by offering an attractive alternative activity if they have repetitive behaviours that are interfering with learning, such as rocking.
- Refer to individual differences openly.
- Ensure that the child is fully aware of the range of activities and materials available.
- Structure development of work so that new experiences occur one at a time.
- Understand that a child may not readily learn appropriate behaviour through observation of their peers and needs practitioners to give verbal feedback.
- Label equipment and personal belongings consistently, using large print or braille as appropriate, to encourage independence.
- When cooking, let a child with a vision impairment feel the ingredients and how the mixture changes. Talk about the smells of the ingredients, before and during cooking.
- Singing songs which use names can help a child with a vision impairment to get to know the names of small groups of new friends.
- Most children find water play irresistible, and children who have a vision impairment can enjoy playing with water with sighted children.
- If the child likes sand, the sandpit can be a good introductory activity. A sandpit that children can sit in provides a small defined area in which three or four children can play together.
- A home corner provides a limited area to explore with a couple of friends. Try to make the materials as lifelike as possible. Some miniature plastic toys can be too small and lack the interesting textures of metal and wood.
- It is easier for sighted children to find someone to play with and gradually discover common interests or personalities that they like, which can lead on to friendship. Staff need to be proactive to ensure that a child with sight problems plays alongside lots of different children, to give them shared experiences.



You can try...

Daily routines

Before children can successfully perform tasks such as dressing, washing and feeding themselves, they must have sufficient hand control to make the right movements – for instance to grasp the soap, rub with a towel, balance food on a spoon, or pull pants up. In addition a child needs to know the names of different parts of the body and understand instructions such as pull, push, over and off. Try to allow plenty of time particularly in the early stages, so that these activities are fun. With all these skills it is important to liaise closely with the child's family so that a consistent approach is used. Teach organisational skills specifically, eg for older children, placing socks inside shoes when undressing.

Dressing

Most parents want their child who has a vision impairment to be dressed in the same way as their sighted friends. With this in mind it is still possible to choose clothes which are simple in design with no back fastenings that will help a child to learn to be more independent. Poppers, zips and velcro are easier than buttons, hooks and laces, which can be mastered at a later stage. Dolls, dolls' clothes and cloth toys with different types of fastenings are useful practice items. But remember that the action may be different when the child does the fastenings on their own clothes.

In the cloakroom, children with a vision impairment can learn to hang their coat on the right peg. A simple tactile marker such as a bead or a distinctive button can identify both coat and peg. If an adult helper talks through what is happening the child will learn useful vocabulary connected with daily routines: "The jumper is going over your head now, put your arms up" etc. The best approach to teaching any of these self-help skills is backward chaining, where the child is encouraged to complete the last item in a process. When that is mastered, add the step before it and the next, down the chain until all the stages in the activity are learned.

Going to the toilet

The age at which children gain bladder control and learn to use the toilet independently varies tremendously, but all the usual principles of encouragement apply. It is helpful to talk to parents to see what approach is being used at home so that a consistent approach can be agreed upon.

When first learning to use a potty or toilet it is important to make the child feel secure, warm and happy, not isolated or stranded in mid-air. Let the child handle the potty (or toilet) beforehand. Let the child feel the ground underfoot and have something to lean on all round. Keep in contact all the time by talking or singing. A reward for success may help – a cuddle or a tune on a music box. The child needs to find out what the potty and later the big toilet is like by exploring it, which will naturally lead into the hand-washing routine!

Washing

This is the easiest activity to make into a game. In fact it will probably be difficult to get the child to stop playing with the water in order to learn how to turn taps on and off, put the plug in and pull it out.



Children need to learn how to dispense liquid soap, or rub a bar of soap and return it, rinse their hands and then find the towel or hand drier. If the towel belongs to the child it should be marked with the same special symbol as the coat and peg and other possessions (see above). The correct way of brushing teeth can be demonstrated by an adult helping the child to hold the brush, and gently brushing the child's own teeth or by playing at doing the same thing to a doll.

You can try...

Eating

Some children may be able to sit and have lunch with their sighted friends with very little adult help. However sometimes difficulties can arise relating to eating when a child cannot see the consistency of the food or watch other people enjoying their meal. It may be necessary to allow a child who is blind or partially sighted to feel and smell food before trying to eat it, so some mess must be expected and prepared for.



If a child does need help, starting with finger food can help to build confidence and independence. If a young child is still learning to use a spoon, use two spoons and let the child attempt self-feeding at the same time as being fed. Always tell the child when the food is coming and what it is called. Never put food straight into a child's mouth without warning. Older children should be encouraged to eat as independently as possible and treated with age appropriate expectations, such as learning to use cutlery and finishing their mouthful before talking. Talk about the food on offer, what it is made from and how it is prepared. A child who is blind may not make the connection between grated carrot, carrot sticks and soft carrot in a casserole. Or that chips, mash and boiled potatoes all start out from a raw potato.

Drinking

For young children a toddler training cup is good to start with, followed by a small unbreakable mug. When offering a drink it is a good idea to see that the child receives this from a hard surface and returns the cup to the place it came from, otherwise the child may return it to mid air and let go. Bring the child's hands down to the table top and place them round the cup before lifting it up, and allow the child to explore the relative positions of the cup and the table top.

Literacy

The EYFS framework says that literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest.

But what does this mean for a child with a vision impairment?

It is essential to seek advice from a qualified teacher of children with visual impairment about the most appropriate activities and approaches to encouraging early literacy. While many children with a vision impairment will be able to enjoy looking at print or large print books and may be able to gain some information from illustrations, a small number of children may need to be introduced to tactile forms of reading and writing such as braille or Moon. You will need expert guidance on the right approach for the individual child and how best to introduce sounds and letters and encourage meaningful mark making and early writing.

Key things to remember

- A rich variety of reading material and opportunities to listen to stories and poems is vital for all children.
- Extra effort may need to be made to ensure that the child is actively involved in whole group sessions. The child's most appropriate seating position in group sessions should be discussed with a qualified teacher of visually impaired children.
- Real objects and practical experiences or trips will extend the child's understanding of vocabulary.
- Use personalised books with added texture, smell or sound as appropriate.
- Opportunities should be given to preview and review story books supported by real objects where relevant.
- Younger children who cannot see print and are likely to learn braille should be made aware that it is the braille dots in the book which, like print letters, carry meaning. ClearVision books are useful (see page 54).
- Experiences should be meaningful where print and braille are used for a purpose.

- Particular consideration will need to be given to:
 - size, weight and clarity of print
 - spacing between words and lines
 - good contrast between print and background
 - good quality pictures, preferably photographs and real objects as alternatives.
- Children with little or no sight often enjoy scribbling with crayons etc and painting, and will eventually need to be able to form a signature.
- Braille and thick black felt tip pens should also be available, under supervision, for emergent writing and children should be encouraged to “sign” every painting, drawing etc like others in the group. They can also be encouraged to post their name every morning in a post box on arrival.



Early literacy

Each child’s journey towards literacy is a unique path reflecting their experiences, opportunities to develop communication skills, their interests and abilities. Here are two learning stories about introducing young blind and partially sighted children to reading. The first is a learning story of a qualified teacher of visually impaired children who was using an approach to reading called Letters and Sounds with one boy:

Ryan has a severe vision impairment. He has aniridia (his iris didn’t form fully), glaucoma and central vision loss which makes it hard for him to see fine detail. He has very poor distance vision and needs to access large print size 48 at a very close distance.

Ryan started in the Reception class in September and he is able to access most of the print at this stage. His reading books have been enlarged and he uses a magnifier and a CCTV. He also has a monocular for distance work. He has the support of a teaching assistant each morning.

The whole of Ryan’s school has started on Letters and Sounds. In the Nursery class, Ryan accessed most of Phase One which includes aspects of environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body percussion, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and oral blending and segmenting.

On entering the Reception Class, Phase Two was started. The purpose of this phase is to teach 19 sounds of letters and blending and segmenting with letters. The aim at the end of this phase is for the children to be able to read and spell VC (vowel consonant eg at, it, is) and CVC (consonant vowel consonant eg cat, hat, man) words and read some high frequency or “tricky words”.

The teaching of the sounds of letters is taught as one set per week in daily teaching sessions which include the practice of oral blending and segmentation.

As I see Ryan once per week, I reinforced the letters taught for that week to ensure he had had full access to what was being taught in class. This included different activities and games as suggested in Letters and Sounds.

The teaching of letters includes:

- recognition (for reading);
- recall (for spelling);
- practising oral blending;
- practising oral segmentation; and
- the teaching and practice of blending for reading.

In January, Ryan started on Phase Three of Letters and Sounds. The pace seemed to quicken with the teaching of 25 graphemes. The children continue to practise CVC blending and segmenting. Further “tricky words” are also taught.

Ryan is a very bright boy and is currently coping well with the fast pace of Letters and Sounds. He is able to access the size of the letters at this stage.

As Ryan progresses through the school and eventually to Phase Six of Letters and Sounds, he will have more difficulty in accessing the size of print, both at near and distance. The volume of the print will also present difficulties for him. It will be important for him to receive additional teaching assistant support in order for him to keep up with the pace of this teaching programme and he may require more teaching from a qualified teacher of visually impaired children.



In this second learning story Peter Lumley, a qualified teacher of children with a vision impairment, writes about introducing early braille literacy to a young girl called Zoe who is blind. Here is one part of her story but you can read the full article in Insight Issue 10, July/August 2007, available from our Online shop.

Zoe has now been in school for a few days and as she enters the classroom she is still surrounded by the noise of children laughing, shouting and talking. Today her teacher is reading a story called ‘The Gruffalo’ by Julia Donaldson.

Zoe is holding her own copy of the book. As the teacher introduces the book and talks about the picture on the cover, Zoe feels the fur on the front of hers. It’s a strange piece of fur with spiky things sticking out of it and two soft circles in the middle. The children listen quietly as the teacher reads the story and each time Zoe hears the teacher turn a page she turns a page in her book and every time the teacher starts to read Zoe finds the braille dots in her book and lightly runs her fingers over them.

Everybody laughs when the Gruffalo, with terrible tusks, terrible jaws and terrible claws, runs away from a tiny mouse because he says he’s going to eat him. In class Zoe makes her own collage picture of the Gruffalo using differently textured materials and objects.

What does Zoe learn from these early literacy experiences?

- books are nice to handle
- the front of the book is called the cover and it usually has a picture and the title of the book on it
- books contain pictures
- you turn the pages of the book when you read it
- when you read a book in either print or braille the story stays the same
- you read braille by running your fingers lightly over the dots from left to right
- braille dots represent letters and punctuation, which make words and sentences, which tell stories and convey information.



Mathematics

The EYFS states that this area of learning involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

What does this mean for a child with a vision impairment?

This is a good area for children to use their knowledge and skills to solve problems and make connections across the other areas of learning and development. Much of their number play will use concrete objects or first-hand experiences, especially outdoors, in their daily routines.

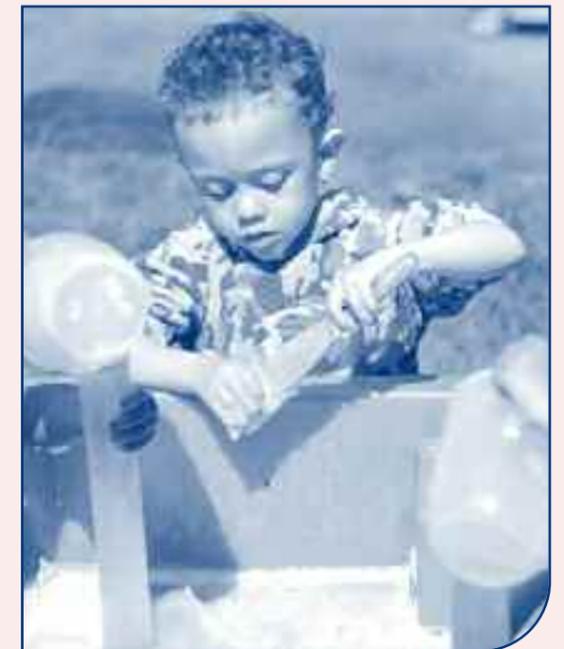
Key things to remember

- Give the child enough time, space and encouragement to discover and use new words and mathematical ideas, concepts and language in their own play.
- Encourage the child to explore real life problems, to make patterns and to count and match together.
- Real experiences, such as counting knives and forks for place settings when laying a table, use numbers for a purpose.
- Counting objects into a container is helpful, especially if a big sound is made!
- Encourage the development of body awareness before introducing positional activities by talking about how the body works.
- Extra time needs to be given to number rhymes, activities and games.
- Support of concrete apparatus and activities should not be withdrawn too soon.
- Use a wide variety of 3-D representations of plane shapes before moving on to 2-D. Some children may need many examples before they can generalise.
- First-hand experiences of height, weight, distance, space and positional language can be effectively developed through experiences outdoors.

You can try...

Space, shape, position and size

- Lots of practical ideas to understand space and relationships such as crawling in and out of boxes, climbing on top, hiding underneath them.
- Experiencing the world from different positions, for example swinging, sliding and being lifted up high. Children need to develop an understanding of position such as the position between different parts of the body, between the body and objects and between objects themselves. Activities such as songs involving body parts, physical activities such as climbing and swimming all help.
- Measuring objects and spaces using hands or shoe lengths to develop an understanding of relative sizes.
- Playing with water and pots to develop an understanding of the capacity of different sized containers. Adding food colouring to the water and using clear containers helps some children to see the water level more easily.
- Weighing ingredients for cooking using talking scales.
- Using Wikki Stix, Blu-Tak or BumpOns to highlight and count edges or vertices (corners) of shapes (see page 55).



You can try...

Number

- Using containers when counting to keep objects in one place. Metal containers provide an additional sound clue when objects are dropped in. This gives practical experience to help a child develop their understanding of visual concepts such as few, many, empty and full.
- Using story bags with props to support stories and rhymes. Use the props for simple problem solving. For example in the song “Five currant buns” you can change the words so that sometimes you add on and sometimes take away.
- Encouraging early mark making of numbers as well as letters, whether in print or braille.
- Playing with dominoes can help children who are likely to learn through braille, as learning to recognise numbers represented by domino type patterns can help them when they begin to learn the position of the braille dots and their “number”. Tactile dominoes are available from our Online shop (see page 55).
- Using lots of tactile apparatus such as number squares, number lines, and counters such as “sorting bears” to help make number more tangible and not just an abstract concept.
- Playing board games using easy to see tactile dice available from our Online shop (see page 55). Try tactile snakes and ladders and adapt number matching games by adding braille to them.
- Encouraging children to count out milk cartons, cups or pieces of fruit for the children at their table at drink time
- Playing with real coins and learning to recognise them.
- Playing with a big button telephone with easy to see numbers.

“Using lots of tactile apparatus to help make number more tangible and not just an abstract concept”

Understanding the world

Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment.

But what does this mean if a child has a vision impairment?

“Babies and children find out about the world through exploration and from a variety of sources”

Children will need to use adults’ knowledge to extend their experiences of the world when there is a loss of incidental learning as a result of a vision impairment. They will need to be given accurate information and support to become aware of and explore the world around them so that they can start to make sense of it for themselves.

Key things to remember

- Create a stimulating environment that offers a range of activities to encourage interest and curiosity, both indoors and outdoors, with lots of things to push, pull, twist and turn.
- Plan activities based on real first-hand experiences.
- Use the correct names for plants and animals and so on.
- Ask carefully framed open ended questions, such as “What would happen if...?” to check children’s growing understanding.
- Teach skills and knowledge in the context of practical activities, for example learning about liquids and solids by involving the child in melting chocolate or cooking eggs.
- Some changes, similarities and differences, such as watching a plant grow, may need to be explained and described. Alternatively children may need to be shown relevant items at close range and it may help if smaller objects are viewed under magnification, using a low vision aid including a closed circuit television. This is something that the whole group can enjoy.
- Support the child in using a range of ICT, such as mobile phones or TV control; technology to support independent learning will be important as they get older.

- Give a child access to tools and materials, with individual instruction, to help develop confidence and finger skills and strength.
- A child's understanding of their own past may be reinforced by use of objects, such as their old baby clothes, where photographs are not helpful.
- When outside, maintain a running commentary about the wider world to fill in the gaps that the child may be missing, such as the purpose of some environmental features like zebra crossings.



You can try...

Time

- Sequencing a session with a hello song, activity, drinks, closing circle so that children get a sense of routine and time.
- Introducing children to a simple tactile or talking watch or clock (see Resources page 54) for example where the hands are at lunch time and home time.

Technology

Most older school children use computers and smart phones regularly to find out information online, learn to use databases and type up their work to present it attractively using graphics and images from the Internet. Most also enjoy playing computer games, downloading music and films, and keeping in touch with friends by visiting social networking sites. Children who are blind or partially sighted have all these aspirations and can learn to use computers and phones to give them access to print, braille and audio and magnified text and images. So a positive attitude to technology is an important foundation.

However it is not always necessary for children to sit in front of a computer to promote their use of information and communications technology (ICT) skills.

You can try...

- Provide a broad range of technology such as digital cameras, DVD players, a tablet computer such as an iPad and electronic keyboards.
- Children can make their own laptop, phone or photocopier, cashpoint machine or barcode scanner to incorporate into their play. This will help them begin to understand the role of ICT in the world.
- Some children who may be reluctant to talk can find their voice using a karaoke machine or playing with a tape recorder and microphone.
- There are lots of computer programs that are suitable for young children with a vision impairment. For example, www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies has programs suitable for children who are blind or partially sighted, and www.inclusive.co.uk has a range of programs to encourage early looking including. Leaps and Bounds is just one from Inclusive Technology that many teachers recommend.
- There are many ways to enable children who are blind or partially sighted to use computers. These include screen readers that read out what is on screen, touch screens that encourage children to look, screen magnifying programs that enlarge the text, easy to see mouse pointers and large print keyboards. Talk to the child's qualified teacher of visual impairment and your ICT adviser for children with special needs for expert age appropriate help.

“Provide a broad range of technology such as digital cameras, DVD players and electronic keyboards”

Graeme Douglas and Mike McLinden from the University of Birmingham explored ways in which a concept keyboard could be used to support the teaching of early tactile reading. A concept keyboard is a computer device which consists of a flat “tray”; when particular areas of the keyboard are pressed a pre-recorded sound can be heard. A tactile overlay is designed and placed on the keyboard to encourage the child to move their fingers along the path and press to get the sound feedback.

“We have created one story entitled ‘Tot the cat is in the kitchen’. The story involves our hero, Tot the cat, planning to make a cake for his sister. Unfortunately he never gets the job finished because he eats and drinks everything he gets his hands on! The story has a very predictable format which helps the child anticipate the story as they read it. The chunks of the story are as follows:

- Tot is going to make a cake
- The cake will be a surprise for his sister Mot
- “Mot will be so happy when she eats the cake!” said Tot
- “I’m a bit thirsty,” said Tot
- “Before I start I’ll drink some...”
- “Milk”
- “I’m a bit hungry” said Tot
- “Before I start I’ll eat some...”
- “Banana”

(This section is repeated with different food and drink.)

This type of story works well with children who are not yet decoding braille. However, for children who are more advanced, the activity can be changed so that instead of the computer telling them what Tot is eating or drinking, they must read an attached braille label.”

“The story has a very predictable format which helps the child anticipate the story as they read it”

Computers can also help listening skills too. Here is the learning story of a young blind child using ICT in a motivating and effective way:

“Sonal was working at the computer in a quiet room to enable her to concentrate on the activity. The program used enabled her to create her own story by listening to a range of options and clicking on the mouse to indicate her preference. Sonal was motivated to listen to all the options and considered her choice carefully. She was on the whole

successful in using the mouse, timing her input to select the option she preferred. She showed real enjoyment and satisfaction at the end of the ten minute session when the complete story was read back to her in synthetic speech. Sonal was developing her skills in auditory scanning and showed confidence and control in the activity.”

“Babies and children learn by being active, and physical development helps children gain confidence in what they can do”



Expressive arts and design

Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology.

But what does this mean if a child has a vision impairment?

Children with a vision impairment need as many first-hand experiences as possible in order to build up a bank of sensory ideas that they can draw upon for creative expression.

In addition when reading stories it is important to ask children what they think is happening, what the scene might look like, what sounds and smells the characters might experience. Arranging a backstage visit for a trip to pantomime or theatre can help a child with sight problems build up a mental picture of the costumes, character and scene. Real experiences will help the development of imaginative play and representation.

“Children with sight problems need as many first-hand experiences as possible in order to build up a bank of sensory ideas”

Some children with a vision impairment may be slower to develop imaginative play. This might be because the child has not had the same experiences as sighted friends. Sighted children see the activities of adults such as shaving, cooking or loading the washing machine. Without effort they see what the adult actually does and then incorporate these actions into their pretend play.

Children who are blind or partially sighted may need to develop understanding of events through rehearsal and practice before participating fully in imaginative role play. This includes developing a sense of other people’s point of view.

Key things to remember

- Ensure the child feels secure enough to “have a go”, to learn new things and be adventurous.
- Present a wide range of experiences and activities that the child can respond to by using many of their senses, such as smelling and rolling in new mown grass.

- Allow sufficient time for a child to explore and develop new ideas without stepping in too soon with your own ideas.
- Value what the child can do and the ideas they produce, even if it looks less than perfect!
- A child will need a variety of sensory experiences to encourage mark making, but find alternatives if he or she dislikes some textures. Children with a vision impairment use their hands as a vital channel for gathering information and may find some textures and materials unacceptable and not like “sticky fingers”. When using glue or finger paints, hand washing should be allowed on request for some children who find sticky fingers a distraction.
- Talk about colour and describe it for the child, even if they cannot see it.
- Encourage them to find strategies to identify colours. This may include pairing with a fully sighted partner or being encouraged to ask, or labelling or using “smelly” crayons.
- When music making, give time for a child to familiarise themselves with the instruments and the sounds they make and find words to describe the sounds, such as high, low, loud, quiet.
- Some children excel in producing music creatively. Others may use music to develop their auditory skills, or enjoy the pleasure of moving to music through dance.
- Using screen magnification some children with a vision impairment can see images sufficiently clearly to explore different designs for example of vehicles or clothing. Children learning by touch might like to explore our range of accessible image books which include books about minibeasts, household objects, vehicles and dwellings.



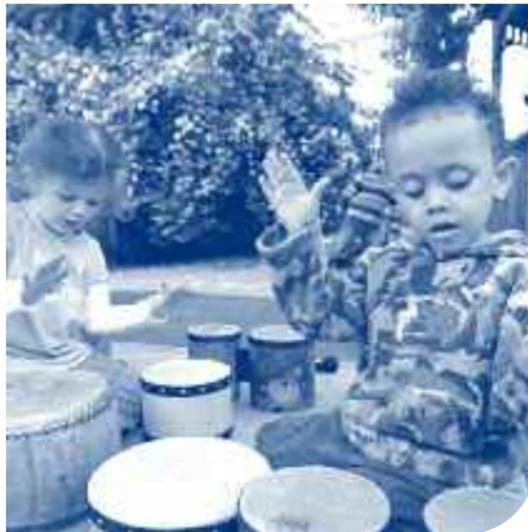
Imaginative play

The 12 features of play

Professor Tina Bruce, an early years specialist, used her own observations of children, informed by a review of the literature, research and theories looking at play, to develop the 12 features of play (Bruce, T (2001) Learning through play: Babies, Toddlers and the Foundation Years. London: Hodder and Stoughton). These features can be used by all practitioners to promote quality play.

The 12 features form a framework for observing babies and young children in order to reflect on and plan for their play. Linda Hubbard, a specialist teacher of visually impaired children, developed this approach to inform her observations of blind and partially sighted children in early years settings (see overleaf). She uses the observations to develop a Play Plan for the children she is working with.

Here she looks at one example of play with telephones and the implications for a child with vision impairment. A fourth column could be added to make comments on examples of play observed by the practitioner.



One teacher shares her learning story on imaginative play with a blind boy. She found the observation sheet about the features of play a very helpful basis.

“First of all I shared the observation sheet with Mum, and later teaching assistants and teachers, and explained that these skills would take longer for a child with no sight to acquire and we had to be purposeful in the way we presented and structured experiences. So at home we pretended to give teddy some dinner and talked on the phone. We took turns in ball rolling games.

When Sean started in nursery, it was difficult to engage in parallel play alongside other children as the building was quite echoey and the children did not have the language to describe what they were doing and often moved off quickly as they could not concentrate very long themselves. The teaching assistant tried to structure some play in the home corner, for example going to McDonald’s with props but this was not very successful.

Outside was a track for riding bikes and big cars with some toy petrol pumps and we had a lot of fun being mum filling up with petrol and asking what was needed. Other children joined in a slightly less fleeting way, again very much supported by language from the teaching assistant describing what they were doing. We tried to find out as much as possible from Mum what outings or events had happened at home so that we could talk about these and rehearse them. Sean also found the noise of the vacuum cleaner and lawn mower quite frightening and soon there was a lot of pretend play around these.

As Sean is very musical we were able to obtain funding for a special music group where he worked with a small group of children every week, developing turn taking and relationships in an area where other children would stay in roughly the same place. He had much to contribute, for instance imaginative ideas from Sean fed into the group music making – including the noise of the Hoover!

This past term Sean’s Individual Education Plan has focused deliberately around relationships and play with other children. The wooden train track has been brilliant as it keeps the children connected so that he doesn’t lose the other children! An adult still provides some structure but is far more in the background. It is so exciting to see this kind of play developing after working towards this for so long.”

Feature of play	Definition	Aspects to consider about children with a vision impairment
Using first hand experiences	Making pretend phone calls with a real/toy phone	Children with a VI may depend on adult to present play stimulus. Make these readily available (within reach) and only offer them if really necessary.
Making up rules	Making up his own rules about how a conversation goes	The child may not have had this experience so be prepared to offer a few hints but try not to dominate the conversation.
Making props	Using the phone as a play prop	You may need to show the child that others are playing with props (toy phones). Model the play yourself if necessary.
Choosing to play	Own choice to play this game	You may need initially to offer a limited choice of activities so that they can make a choice but then encourage self-choice in the future.
Rehearsing the future	Rehearsing the way that adults behave	Make sure that the child will also sometimes rehearse how siblings or peers behave, as they can become very adult orientated.
Pretending	Pretending to have a conversation with an imaginary person	Some children with VI find it difficult to make this imaginary step. Do not mistake it for self obsessed, self-centred conversation where the child has withdrawn into themselves.
Playing alone	Content with own company	Make sure they are actively engaged and not withdrawn as above and isolated or overwhelmed.

Feature of play	Definition	Aspects to consider about children with a vision impairment
Playing together	If joined by another pretending to be the other end of the phone line	This can be difficult for a child with VI to achieve. After the initial bringing together if required, leave alone for them to establish their own communication. Sometimes however, other children need to be reminded to speak to the child with VI but this is not always effective.
Having a personal agenda	Deciding what they are going to do when they play	Encourage decisiveness but do not lead the way or the child will not learn to think for themselves.
Being deeply involved	When so deep in play that they do not want and should not get adult interference	Observe carefully to ensure that this is what is happening. Children with a VI (particularly those who are blind) do not always play in the same way as sighted children.
Trying out recent learning	Showing his skill in how to use a telephone	Children with a vision impairment may need to try things many more times than sighted children in order to perfect their skills and understanding.
Co-ordinating ideas, feelings and relationships for free-flow play	Able to bring together in a way which makes sense for him, what he knows about telephones and what telephones are for; using his relationships with parents, peers etc as the catalyst for his play	To the casual observer, children with a vision impairment often appear to be engaged and playing happily but may in fact just be hovering on the fringes of an activity trying to understand what is going on. They may also “butterfly” from one activity to the next. Be sure to carefully analyse what is happening.

Observation sheet from Curriculum Close Up Issue 20, 2005,
Focus on early years

Bringing it all together

Although the ideas have been presented separately under each of the seven areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage, many work well for other areas of a child's learning. Children learn holistically not in separate areas and this is particularly important for a child with a vision impairment who is trying to make connections in their experiences and focus on the foundations of learning. The early years setting plays a vital role in introducing children to new ideas and experiences. Children who have fun, feel loved and safe will feel confident to face future challenges and take with them a great attitude to learning.



Glossary

Braille

A tactile form of reading made up of raised dots on a page.

Braille

A machine for writing braille; sometimes called a Perkins which is one of the commonly used makes of braille.

CCTV

A closed circuit television. A magnifying camera that enlarges objects and images for children to see on the screen.

ClearVision

A lending library of children's picture books in print which have clear interleaved pages in braille. For contact details see Resources page 54.

Glaucoma

Damage to the optic nerve where it leaves the eye caused by raised eye pressure and/or weakness in the optic nerve.

IEP

An Individual Education Plan, sometimes written as an Individual Play Plan for children with special educational needs.

Letters and sounds

Guidance provided in 2007 by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families in England on using phonics for reading and spelling.

Magnifier

A low vision aid that enlarges images for children.

Mobility specialist

Teaches children with a vision impairment how to move around independently and safely. Sometimes known as a rehabilitation worker, or orientation and mobility worker.

Monocular

A low vision aid to enlarge distant images such as text on a whiteboard, poster, or wall-mounted clock or bus numbers.

Occupational therapist

Helps children improve their ability to carry out everyday activities.

Physiotherapist

A health professional specialising in physical and motor development.

QTVI

A specialist teacher who has an additional qualification and experience in working with children with a vision impairment.

Resources and further reading

Resources

Department for Education

The Early Years Foundation Stage materials are available from the Department for Education Publications on:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a0068102/early-years-foundation-stage-eyfs>

Further information about the Foundation Years is available on:

www.foundationyears.org.uk/early-years-foundation-stage-2012/

The Early Support resources are available on: www.ncb.org.uk/earllysupport

These include:

- The Visual Impairment Information Book for Parents which contains general advice and information.
- The Developmental Journal for Babies and Children with a Visual Impairment which helps parents support their child's progress in the early years.

Booktouch

Aims to get babies and toddlers who are blind or partially sighted "bookstarted". A Booktouch pack is available free to parents or carers of children who are blind or partially sighted up to (and including) the age of four. These packs contain specially chosen touch and feel books.

Telephone 020 8516 2995

www.bookstart.co.uk

ClearVision Library

A UK postal lending library of mainstream children's books with added braille. The books all have braille (or Moon), print and pictures, making them suitable for visually impaired and sighted children and adults to share.

Telephone 020 8789 9575

www.clearvisionproject.org

Inclusive Technology Ltd

A supplier of hardware equipment and software that help people with special educational needs to use a computer, communicate and learn. Leaps and Bounds has activities to introduce children in the early years to vital skills, including mouse skills, decision making, visual and auditory stimulation, left or right orientation and tracking.

Telephone 01457 819790

www.inclusive.co.uk

Sightline directory

This fully searchable online directory, with over 1,700 entries, provides quick and easy access to national and local specialist organisations and services that support blind and partially sighted people, including children and young people and their families.

www.sightlinedirectory.org.uk

The following are available from RNIB on 0303 123 9999

www.rnib.org.uk/shop

BumpOns

A simple and effective way to mark everyday items. The raised bumps are supplied on self-adhesive sheets and available in a range of sizes, shapes and colours.

Wikki Stix

Endlessly re-usable flexible strips can be bent, stuck together and pressed on to most surfaces to form creative and colourful tactile pictures. Made of a non-toxic wax formula in a yarn strand.

Talking kitchen scales

Easy-to-use mains and battery operated talking kitchen scales that announce weights in 5 gram steps (metric) with adjustable volume control. Large secure plastic bowl and non-slip feet.

Tactile dominoes

Easy-to-see and tactile dominoes supplied in a black plastic case. Black dots are all raised on white plastic dominoes with a tactile ridge dividing the two halves of each domino.

Tactile dice

Pair of dice with easy-to-see and feel raised black dots on a white background.

Further reading

Unless otherwise indicated, visit our Online shop to browse and purchase the following publications, and more, at www.rnib.org.uk/shop or contact RNIB, PO Box 173, Peterborough PE2 6WS Telephone 0303 123 9999 Email shop@rnib.org.uk

Early years

Your first steps

Practical information about supporting children with sight problems in the early years. It explains how the eye works and introduces the services available to children and families.

£4.95

2002, ED289 (Print) Early Years series

Which way?

For parents and carers of children with sight problems who have additional complex communication, learning or physical needs. Practical ideas to help you meet your child's day-to-day needs and fun ways to help children to become more aware.

£3.50

2002, ED296 (Print) Early Years series

Early focus (Second edition) by Pogrund RL & Fazzi DL

About working with young children with sight loss and their families. Provides a comprehensive overview of all the developmental areas that may be affected by vision loss. Four new chapters cover the delivery of early intervention services, developing skills in young children in areas of literacy, daily living, independence and motor behaviour.

Available from American Foundation for the Blind www.afb.org

and from Amazon www.amazon.co.uk for approx. £37.00.

2002, 532 pages, paperback, ISBN 0891288562

Disorders of vision in children

This CD-Rom includes HTML and PDF versions of the book with colour photos. The book explains how the eyes and brain enable us to see and interpret shape, colour, contrast, depth and movement. It describes conditions leading to sight loss, assessing what a child sees in different situations and explains how to organise learning to meet individual needs. Written by Richard Bowman, Ruth Bowman and Gordon Dutton.

£9.95 2010, ED512 (CD-Rom)

Free resources to download

These articles by specialists who have worked with blind and partially sighted children are available for free download:

- Infant massage for you and your child
- Using touch and movement to help your child learn
- An introduction to Treasure baskets
- Sensory boxes
- A charter for families of young children

Visit www.rnib.org.uk/earlyyearslearning for more information.

Count me in

This DVD promotes good practice in the inclusion of blind and partially sighted children and young people in learning. See children with sight loss at work, at play and being part of their learning community in early years, mainstream and special school settings. For teachers, teaching assistants, special educational needs workers and senior managers. Includes audio description, audio navigation and key message subtitles.

£29.95

2010, ED499 (DVD video)

Hear me out

This audio CD contains two hours of interviews with blind and partially sighted children and young people about their lives at home and school. Children talk about their visual impairment, staying healthy, getting about on their own, friends, how they are treated and what they want to do when they leave school. Includes a DAISY version.

£15.00

2010, ED500 (Audio CD)

Set of Count me in and Hear me out

£40.00

2010, ED501 (DVD video and Audio CD)

Toys, games and play

Advice on toys

Toys and play is written by RNIB in association with the British Toy and Hobby Association. It provides advice on choosing toys for blind or partially sighted children as well as offering ideas about play activities to promote development. This online publication replaces the RNIB/BTHA Toy Catalogue: "Playtime".

You can download it for free from our website at

www.rnib.org.uk/earlyyearslearning. It is one of a series of leaflets developed by the BTHA and other partner organisations, covering a range of disabilities. You can find more information about the series on the BTHA website www.btha.co.uk

Play it my way

A resource book for parents providing a wealth of tried and tested play ideas, toys and materials which can be used to enliven everyday routines and help children with sight problems find out about the world around them.

£9.95

2000, ED130 (Print)

Books for children and young people about sight loss

Charlotte has impaired vision by Powell J

About the day in the life of a girl who has sight loss. Charlotte shows us how she gets around, reads in braille and goes to a tap dancing class. The text is illustrated with attractive colour photos and is supported by practical advice, fact boxes and a further information section.

Published by Evans Books 2005, 32 pages, hardback, ISBN 0237530325

Approx. £6.99

The Patch by Hedley, Justina C

This is a picturebook story about five year old Becca who has a condition known as Amblyopia or "lazy eye". Her eye doctor prescribes new glasses and wants her to wear an eye patch over her good eye to help her lazy eye grow stronger. Becca worries that wearing an eye patch might make her friends think less of her. So she makes up wild stories about why she's wearing an eye patch. Is she a pirate, or a private detective, or a monster? "The Patch" is particularly recommended for primary school libraries and for any child aged 5 to 8 receiving "lazy eye" treatment.

Available from Amazon www.amazon.co.uk for approx. £4.80. Published by Charlesbridge Publishing 2007, 32 pages, paperback, ISBN 9781580891707

Early education

Shared reading books

These are standard print illustrated books that have been adapted to include braille on clear interleaved sheets, so the pictures and print story can be read underneath, enabling shared reading between sighted and blind readers, such as parent and child, teacher and child, friends. Available while stocks last.

Prices start at £5.00.

RNIB PenFriend audiobooks

Our PenFriend audiobooks for children include traditional stories like Goldilocks and the Three Bears to more modern stories like Brrm, Brrm Let's Go and Deepak's Diwali. They can be read using the printed text or by listening to the audio files supplied on CD, which you can upload via a computer onto your RNIB PenFriend audio labeller. The MP3 files are stored on your RNIB PenFriend and when you touch the "sound zones" on each page, the text for that page is read out. Available while stocks last. Prices start at £20.00.

Personalised story CDs

Children can be the star of the story with one of our personalised story CDs. Their name is individually recorded into the CD storyline so they hear their name, again and again and the narrator talks directly to them throughout. There are rhymes, songs and games along the way for both of you to join in with. Age range 5–10. All titles are available while stocks last.

Prices start at £15.31.

Tactile books

Our delightful fabric tactile books encourage children to explore with their fingers the way that different materials feel and sound. Fingerfun books contain simple, entertaining stories in large print with bold black and white illustrations and a robust, brightly coloured thermoform of an everyday object at every page opening. Tactus tactile books follow the shared reading book format, including both print and braille with wonderful tactile images to explore. All titles are available while stocks last. Prices start at £12.00.

Catalogues

Product catalogues

RNIB supplies a range of adapted games and learning materials specially designed for children with sight problems via a number of product catalogues. Available in large print, braille and audio. Free of charge.

Publications catalogue

Our latest information on eye conditions, living with sight loss, learning, how to make your services accessible to people with sight problems and much more. Available to download free of charge at www.rnib.org.uk/publications

Magazines and newsletters

Insight

Insight is our premier magazine for professionals working with children and young people, as well as for parents and carers. Published bimonthly, it focuses on the education, health and wellbeing of children with sight problems, including those with complex needs. Regular features include eye health, family life, early years, the curriculum and access to learning. For subscription details, visit www.rnib.org.uk/insightmagazine or call on 0303 123 9999.

Education newsletter

To get the latest educational news, policy insight and training opportunities with updates on specialist educational products and resources subscribe by emailing cypf@rnib.org.uk or visit www.rnib.org.uk/educationalresources

RNIB websites

Learning

Advice for parents on supporting the learning of blind or partially sighted children in the early years at www.rnib.org.uk/education

Parents' Place

Parents' Place is our website for parents and carers who have a child with sight loss at www.rnib.org.uk/parents

A safe place to meet, share experiences and get hold of up to date and relevant parenting information. It includes information about understanding your child's vision, coming to terms with your child's sight problem, and ideas to help your child with eating, dressing and everyday routines.

Insight



Do you support a child or young person who is blind or partially sighted?

Insight magazine is packed full of practical ideas, personal stories and advice from teachers, parents and leading experts to inspire you at home and in the classroom.

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- families sharing their experiences
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- **Well prepared!** – your guide to modifying exam materials
- **What can you see?** – how to encourage and develop social skills
- **One of the class** – practical ways to include learners with sight problems
- **Fit for all** – including children with sight loss in sport.

Discover more at www.rnib.org.uk/shop
Search "Publications about sight loss" for expert views and practical ideas.



Focus on foundation combines the ideas and expertise of many early years practitioners and qualified teachers of children with visual impairment. It is packed with practical ideas for the successful inclusion of children with sight loss in early years settings including reception classes.

Fully revised in October 2012 to reflect changes in early years provision in England it includes learning stories that illustrate tried and tested approaches in different areas of learning and development. It is written for all who work in early years settings such as nurseries, reception classes, children's centres, playgroups, and out of school clubs. It may also be of interest to childminders welcoming a child with sight problems into their home.

For easy reference it closely follows the format of the Early Years Foundation Stage and endorses the principles for early years learning and development.



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Early Years series