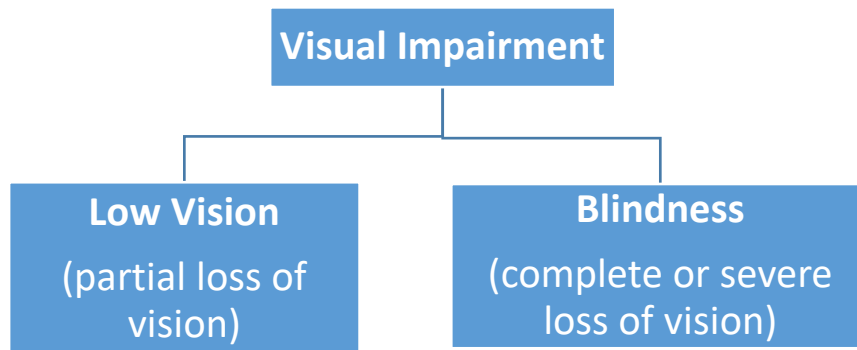


3. Visual impairment

Visual impairment is a broad term used to describe the complete or partial loss of vision.



The biggest challenges most children with visual impairment face are:

- moving around independently
- understanding and using non-verbal communication (facial expressions and body language)
- reading and writing.

It is important to realise that children who are born blind (or with very limited vision) or have lost their vision at a very early age have different needs, and face different barriers, than children who have lost their vision later during their childhood.



What can you do in your role to support girls with visual impairments?

Remember that no two children are the same and be prepared to try different approaches to find out what works best for each child.

Physical

- Ask the girl about her visual impairment, to understand specific issues she may have.
- Be aware of the lighting in the room. Does it help or hinder the learner? Ask them. Many children with visual impairment feel bothered by light, but others will benefit from it because it helps them with mobility. Be prepared to try out different ways of seating with respect to the lighting in the Hub. Seat learners with low vision so that they can maximise the use of their residual vision, but make sure that they are not blinded by too much light. Again, it is essential to ask individual learner what is best for them.
- Remove unnecessary physical obstacles in the Hub.

- If possible, keep the seating arrangements fixed for learners with visual impairment so that they can orient themselves and find their way around independently.
- If the layout of Hub is not consistent, plan how you will let the learner know of any changes when you make them.
- Seat girls with visual impairment in a position that they can hear well; they will depend on their hearing more than most other learners. Ask individual girls where in the classroom is best for them to hear.
- The girl may have some sight; are they sitting in the best place to see what is happening? If you are using a board, is it clean, and close enough for them to see.
- The learner may use a magnifying lens. Without this they will not be able to read text and view classroom items. It is therefore useful for you to keep a spare lens in the Hub.
- Important objects in the classroom (e.g. books, learning materials) should not be moved around too much.

Social

- Encourage the class to think about how to include their friends with visual impairment in physical education programmes. It is important that children are involved in helping to include all learners.
- Think who the girl is sat near or working with. Can this group be selected to support positive social interactions?
- Make sure that the girl signals to you or your colleagues when clarification is needed, and in a way that is not embarrassing for her.
- Involve other children in the class to help. Explaining a visual concept to a person who cannot see is an interesting challenge for a sighted person, and can help to develop their own understanding.
- Try to speak while facing the learner (not away from them) because children with visual impairment need to hear you clearly.
- Address all learners by name during discussion activities.

Activities

- Read everything that is written on the blackboard aloud and slowly.
- If you are writing on a board, remember to describe any visual information (e.g. words and pictures).
- Check that you are heard. Is the pace and clarity of your speech accessible for the learner?
- Do you need to differentiate an activity so that the learner can complete it successfully? For example, allow learners with visual impairment enough time to complete tasks – for example writing in Braille takes much longer than writing with pen and paper, as does reading and writing with a hand lens.

- Select books with good print quality and layout. Text that is left-aligned (with an even left margin, and an uneven right margin) is easier for children with low vision to read, and also benefits other children who struggle with reading.
- Use real objects that learners can feel and handle, such as bean bags, counters and pencils. If an activity uses objects, pass these around. Find ways of including objects e.g. if you are carrying out numeracy activities you can use beads or tactile materials.
- Produce tactile learning materials, for example a map made of materials with different textures.
- Try to find books in Braille for learners who depend on Braille for reading and writing.

Reference:

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

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