



Visual impairment support

Accessibility for visually impaired pupils

About this fact sheet

This fact sheet provides some general guidance and suggestions to help with possible adaptations to a school's physical environment to make it more accessible for pupils with a visual impairment.

How can the visual impairment service help?

If a pupil with a visual impairment is attending or due to attend school the visual impairment service can carry out an environmental audit based on the individual needs of the pupil. In addition advice can be sought from us to complete a risk assessment if required.

Any works that are completed must be carried out in accordance with manufacturers guidance and statutory guidance.

Safety must always be a major consideration when making recommendations to adapt the environment to be more accessible for children and young people with a visual impairment. It is also important to ensure that the physical conditions of a nursery, school or college building do not create barriers to learning.

Tips - indoors

Lighting and shade

Working in a well-lit environment is important to all of us. We need good lighting using sources of natural and artificial light particularly in corridors and stairways. Light should be controllable by switch/blinds/curtains

Colour and contrast

Colour and contrast help us to use our vision successfully to find our way around the environment, separate the foreground from the background and identify people, places and objects. Given the role of vision in direct and incidental learning, thoughtful and sensitive use of colour and contrast will benefit everyone.

Colour and contrast are most important in the following areas:

- Signage
- Handrails
- Fittings in toilets and changing rooms eg tiles around washbasins
- Light switches
- To define a circulation route
- To increase the visibility of doors/doorframes/ handles
- Work surfaces/cupboard/lockers
- Any items which might protrude such as coat pegs/hooks
- To contrast furniture with flooring
- Glass doors/large windows could be covered with suitable transfers

Try to avoid having:

- Patterned wall or floor coverings which can be confusing
- Complicated coloured patterns on items e.g. tableware
- High gloss finishes as reflection can distort images

Floors and Flooring

- Contrasting colour/tone should be used for distinguishing stairs from the approaching floor
- Flooring should be of good quality to prevent 'tripping' hazards
- Floors should be free from obstacles and clutter eg bags, boxes left lying around
- Flooring should not produce glare
- Door mats should be recessed

Changes in Level (stairs, steps, ramps)

- All stairs/steps should have continuous handrails on both sides, placed at suitable heights for all children
- Tops and bottoms of ramps should be easily distinguished by contrasting texture/colour
- Stairs should have nosing (step edging) of contrasting colour

Signage

The purpose of signage is to communicate information clearly. The following therefore need to be considered:

- Text should be of a suitable size and font (serif fonts should be avoided)
- There should be good contrast between the background and text of the sign
- There should be good contrast between the sign and the background that it is positioned against

Tips - outdoors

- Any steps should be highlighted in contrasting colours - slip resistant paint should be used
- Handrails should be fitted for all steps/ramps
- Pathways should have clear defined edges
- Floor surfaces should be even and well finished
- All bushes/hedges/trees should be cut back from steps and pathways
- Parking should not be allowed in non-designated areas.
- Playground equipment should have good contrast.
- Moveable equipment should be set up in the same place each time.
- All plants should be non toxic and safe to touch.

Safety

Potential hazards can be overlooked and this can be particularly dangerous for children who have poor sight. Both children and carers need to be aware of the potential dangers which can easily be rectified:

- Objects at head height; eg coat pegs, hanging plants, lockers etc
- Windows left open, especially those at head height
- Bags left lying on the floor
- Electric cables across the floor
- Tilted chairs and chairs being pushed back suddenly
- Sharp objects held by other children; eg scissors, pencils etc
- Insecure doors which may 'catch' in the wind
- Glass doors such as patios or large plain glass windows
- Inconsistent lighting
- Doors left ajar
- Locker or cupboard doors left to swing open
- Slippery or chipped and broken edges of steps
- Holes in carpet or lino
- Deliveries left in corridors

More information

The visual impairment service is part of Dudley Disability Service. We are a team of qualified teachers of the visually impaired and specialist teaching assistants.

We provide advice and information to parents and teachers. We help teach and support children with a visual impairment of all ages and abilities. We also assess children's vision. In addition we support and advise on the use of specialist equipment and train in the use of low vision aids, provide Braille and enlarged or modified learning materials, provide training independence and mobility training and teach touch typing and specialist software. We will also liaise with other professionals such as social care, healthcare and RNIB.

For further information or advice, please contact us at:

The Mere

Lawnswood Road

Wordsley

Stourbridge

DY8 5PQ

Tel: 01384 818003

Fax: 01384 814241

Email - judy.lewis@dudley.gov.uk

This publication is available in large print, braille or audio. An easy read version is also available. To request a copy call 01384 813400 or email L2L@dudley.gov.uk