**Low Vision: What to look for**

The following list, although not exhaustive, should assist you to become aware of a possible vision impairment.

***Appearance of the eyes:***

* Closing one eye to see into the distance or near to (or both).
* Covering an eye when trying to read or look at the board.
* Excessive blinking or rubbing of eyes.
* Complaints about the eyes e.g. ‘prickling’, ‘sore’, ‘hurts’, etc.
* Screws up eyes. Frowning or scowling.
* Inflamed, bloodshot, cloudy and/or weeping eyes.
* Drooping, red rimmed, swollen or encrusted eyelids.
* Unusual movements of the eyes e.g. ‘wobbling’, ‘jerking’, especially when the child is tired or is trying to concentrate.
* The pupils of the eyes are different sizes.
* Squints and eyes which do not appear straight or look strange (especially when tired).

***General behaviour:***

*Quiet, timid, child:*

* Stands at edge of a group and watches.
* Hesitant about joining in with the others. Sometimes appears frightened for no apparent reason, particularly when other children are moving quickly or when in an ‘open space’ such as the playground.
* Leans on or touches a stable object like a chair or wall and is reluctant to let go.
* Moves around in the classroom by going from object to object or is taken around by another child.
* Is a ‘clingy’ child who wants to stay close to an adult.
* Is constantly ‘daydreaming’, in a world of his own.

*One area preference:*

* Continually chooses gross motor activities-is reluctant to try fine motor activities.
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* Reluctant to move from one physical area to another, particularly if the lighting conditions change.
* Very slow in moving from one area to another.

*Clumsiness:*

* Has poor balancing ability.
* Bumps into things, e.g. tables, chairs, other children. Bangs shoulder when turning corners.
* Trips more frequently for no apparent reason or over small objects etc.
* Misjudges distances and heights, especially steps and stairs.
* Treats a change in colour of the floor surface as a step.
* Is very cautious when moving over changes in the floor surface, pavement, path etc.

*Frustration:*

Often a child with a vision impairment knows what they want to do and knows how to do the task, but is unable to do it because of their visual difficulty. Thus the child may experience repeated failure which can lead to…

* Restlessness or lack of interest in activities requiring close use of sight.
* Apparent confidence which is not matched by performance.
* Reluctance or refusal to try new activities.
* Aggression towards equipment/apparatus or other children or adults.
* Antisocial behaviour for no apparent reason.

*Difficulty with bright light/glare:*

* Complains about or avoids bright sunlight or brightly lit areas, bright and/or glossy paper.
* Shows discomfort, sometimes acute, cries etc. if ‘forced’ to be in the above areas or use the paper. Will often be stubborn or aggressive.
* Shades, screws up and/or rubs eyes in bright light.

*Difficulty in dim light:*

* Will insist on taking objects, books etc. to a window or light to look at them.
* Often becomes clumsy in movement and manipulation in less brightly lit areas e.g. stairwells, corridors etc.
* Peers or looks closely in dim light.
* Has difficulty in adjusting to differences between bright and dim areas (especially coming in from a sunny day into a dim corridor or similar situations).
* Insists on having the lights on in the classroom etc. (at all times, as soon as there is a slight diminishment in daylight etc.). Gets upset if this is not done.

***Specific behaviour:***

*Handling objects and pictures:*

* Gets very close to objects or pictures when looking at them.
* Holds objects or pictures at arm’s length or moves back to look at them.
* Prefers pictures with bold, dark outlines.
* Shows difficulty in finding one object among a group of others, or looking at the detail in a picture.
* Dislikes or has difficulties with activities such as jigsaws that require detailed concentration and an over view.
* Holds objects and/or pictures at an odd angle to look at them.
* Puts head on one side, or turns head slightly away when looking at pictures etc.
* Shows difficulty with games, such as dominoes, snakes and ladders etc. where a child must look at both ends of a line or shape.

*Difficulty with colour identification:*

* Understands the concept ‘same as’ in other situations, but cannot match colours.
* Confuses particular colours e.g. red and green, yellow and green.
* Uses the wrong colours in pictures e.g. red grass.
* Shows difficulties in responding to pictures, describing them, finding ‘all things’ of one colour etc.

*Reading:*

* Peers at books out of the corner of an eye.
* Has an unusual short or long reading distance e.g. standing to read all the time, placing head close to the table, holding the book close to their eyes or at arm’s length.
* Holding the book up, finding it difficult to read if the book is flat, or at a peculiar angle (either on table or held).
* Moves their head rather than eyes when reading from a book or board.
* Turns or tilts head to use one eye.
* Body rigid or thrusting head forward when trying to read from a book or board.
* Attempts to ‘brush away’ blurs with their hand or shakes their head, rubs eyes, frowns, blinks excessively when trying to read near, at a distance or both.
* Avoids reading and other close work or is irritable when pressed to do it.
* Has a short attention span, is restless and shows lack of interest. Says the book is too hard, boring, etc.
* Loses their place easily, misses out words, lines. Finger points (long after it should be necessary), or has to use a line marker.
* Dislikes reading aloud or finds it very difficult to do so and tries to avoid it.
* Confuses certain letters e.g. cl for d; a for o; h for b etc. Reverses letters and or words.
* Has difficulty in remembering what has been read.
* Is a slow reader, hesitant, inaccurate, says any word that comes into their head.
* Is unable to read their own handwriting.

*Writing:*

* Poorly formed letters/figures. Starts and finishes them anywhere.
* Inability to copy accurately from the board etc.
* Uses an unusual or fisted writing grip. Frequently breaks pencils, smudges ink etc. prefers to use a ‘large’ pen or pencil.
* Insists on having the paper at a certain angle on the table. Often changes it as they write/draw.
* Spidery, sloppy or minute writing that is difficult to read. Large writing that goes all over the page for no apparent reason!
* Inability to write on a line. Writes at a slant (usually upwards or at an angle); writes in columns (large columns on right, left or both); does not use all of the page.
* The spaces between letters and words are unusual (or non-existent). Drawings are disjointed, upside down. Letters are reversed or upside down.
* Has difficulty in remembering, identifying and reproducing basic geometric shapes. Problems drawing from memory (upside down etc.).
* Is a ‘slow worker’. ‘Struggles’ to write. Avoids it if possible.
* Scowls, frowns, screws up eye/eyes when trying to write.

*Hand-eye coordination:*

* Fumbles over fine hand-eye activities and makes frequent mistakes.
* ‘Misses’ objects etc. when reaching for them or placing them.
* Has difficulty in building ‘towers’ and/or placing objects in sequence.
* Has problems joining dots or points, has to work slowly one at a time.
* Cannot draw a straight line in one ‘go’, has to make frequent stops.
* Problems using scissors, compasses etc.
* Has difficulty in measuring, marking, using a protractor etc.
* Problems in drawing and other fine art activities.