

Visual Impairment in the Early Years

Specialist Teaching Learning Services – Sensory Service aims to support families and children in order to maximise the learning experiences of children with a visual impairment. Our team includes Qualified Teachers of Visual Impairment and Early Years Visual Impairment Play Specialists. We work with children from birth or diagnosis of visual impairment until they leave school. We recognise each child as an individual.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage we will:

- ✓ **Support the family**
- ✓ **Provide advice and information**
- ✓ **Work in partnership with parents and encourage their full involvement**
- ✓ **Monitor the child’s development and functional vision/compensatory skills**
- ✓ **Provide specialist support for children with little or no vision**
- ✓ **Work collaboratively with other agencies**

Supporting the family throughout the early years

We aim to:

- ◆ Support the family, including the extended family, in the home
- ◆ Provide information on the child’s visual impairment
- ◆ Offer regular support from an Early Years VI Play Specialist if needed
- ◆ Provide liaison with a Qualified Teacher for the Visually Impaired
- ◆ Provide a “listening ear”
- ◆ Support transitions into Early Years and school settings
- ◆ Support visits to settings and schools as appropriate
- ◆ Empower parents to gain confidence in making choices for their child
- ◆ Offer contact with other families and local support networks

Providing advice and information

We aim to:

- ◆ Provide appropriate local and national literature
- ◆ Interpret medical information for parents
- ◆ Provide information on specialist modes of communication e.g. tactile - Braille, Moon, Canaan Barrie on body signs.
- ◆ Discuss the range of educational opportunities including early years settings and school placements
- ◆ Discuss respite care as appropriate
- ◆ Advise on appropriate toys, sensory materials and books
- ◆ Discuss Local Authority and Statutory Assessment procedures

Working in partnership with parents to encourage full involvement

We aim to:

- ◆ Help the parents to understand the child’s needs through a variety of strategies, including modelling, teaching, observation and use of video recording
- ◆ Demonstrate good play techniques to encourage the child’s development

- ◆ Encourage the parents to make good use of appropriate equipment to aid their child's development
- ◆ Discuss strategies to manage behaviours relating to visual impairment
- ◆ Respect families values

Monitoring the child's development and functional vision/compensatory skills

We aim to:

- ◆ Build a picture of functional vision through observation and play activities
- ◆ Liaise with a range of Health professionals to provide and obtain information relating to visual impairment to assist planning
- ◆ Use relevant assessment tools to identify strengths and areas for development
- ◆ Plan appropriate programmes to support learning
- ◆ Provide specific targets and activities relating to the areas of development that may be affected by visual impairment
- ◆ Provide individual programmes, including access to the Foundation Curriculum through tactile and multi-sensory approaches
- ◆ Provide reports to inform parents and other professionals of the impact of visual Impairment on learning
- ◆ Celebrate achievements
- ◆ Provide advice to be included as part of Statutory Assessment procedures

Providing specialist support for children with little or no vision

We aim to:

- ◆ Advise and train on exploring the world through other senses especially touch and hearing
- ◆ Encourage the child's self esteem
- ◆ Advise on tactile/sensory curriculum
- ◆ Advise on providing a rich multi sensory environment
- ◆ Advise on the differentiation needed for early literacy and numeracy skills in tactile and enlarged print
- ◆ Provide specialist sessions for child to experience tactile or multisensory approaches to learning
- ◆ Encourage children with low vision to safely explore their environment
- ◆ Advise on a programme to develop early mobility skills, in partnership with Paediatric Mobility Officers from Kent Association for the Blind
- ◆ Advise and support the use of low vision aids
- ◆ Advise on computer access

Working collaboratively with other agencies

With parental agreement we aim to:

- ◆ Liaise with other agencies to encourage a consistent approach to working with the child, including joint visits and meetings around the child
- ◆ Work with our partners in Social Care Sensory Team and Kent Association for the Blind

The STLS – Sensory Service has an open referral system for children and young people with visual impairment.

For further information please contact:

Karen Martin

Area Coordinator for Sensory Impairment and Specialist Teacher for Visual Impairment

Tel:07827 361247 Email: kmartin@valence.kent.sch.uk