

STLS Sensory Service

Longsightedness or hypermetropia

Here are some strategies to help schools meet the needs of children with longsightedness. This is also called hypermetropia or hyperopia.

Hypermetropia

Hypermetropia is also known as 'long-sight'. This means that a child who is 'long-sighted' is more likely to see better at 'long' distance than 'short'. Often children with hypermetropia can see clearly when watching the television or the blackboard but may find reading a book difficult. They may have to focus very hard to see near things clearly. This may cause eye strain and headache.

Mild hypermetropia is a common and normal finding in most young children. Many children 'grow out' of hypermetropia by adulthood.

Hypermetropia is a form of refractive error. This means that the visual difficulties it causes can be corrected by wearing glasses or contact lenses. If they have no additional visual difficulties then wearing glasses or contact lenses should restore normal vision.

Why can objects at long distance be seen clearly but not at short distance?

For clear and comfortable vision light must be focussed sharply onto the retina at the back of the eye. Most hypermetropic eyes can focus the light from a far object. Many hypermetropic (or long-sighted) eyes have difficulty focussing the light from an object at short distance. Instead the light focuses to a sharp point in behind the retina. The vision is then blurred. If the object is taken further away from the eye, the point at which the light focuses sharply will move forwards onto the retina. An object at a longer distance then becomes clear: the eye is 'long-sighted'.

General Strategies

- Check with parents that a child's glasses are for full time wear.
- Make sure that the children wears glasses when they are at school, for all curriculum activities and for assemblies as well.
- Check that the glasses are kept clean.
- Keep a spare pair of glasses in school in case the child forgets them.
- Check with parents that the child is attending optician appointments and that they are wearing glasses with an up to date prescription.
- Be vigilant for any of the following with the other pupils that you teach. These are possible signs that a child may be having visual difficulties and could need to attend an optician appointment. Consult parents about behaviours if you are concerned and think that the child might need an eye test:
 - Difficulty reading words beyond a particular distance, or smaller than a given print size
 - A child needing to view very closely in order to read something or see detail
 - Tiredness or lack of concentration
 - Inability to complete work
 - Copying from a neighbour