

STLS Sensory Service

Photophobia

Here are some strategies to help schools meet the needs of children with photophobia. The needs of children and young people with photophobia can be met through Quality First Teaching and simple strategies used in the classroom. In the majority of cases these children and young people do not require specialist interventions from a Qualified Teacher for Visual Impairment. The information in the universal section of the Mainstream Core Standards for VI and the Best Practise Guidance for settings will also be useful.

What is Photophobia?

Photophobia, also known as light sensitivity, is common in people who are diagnosed with visual impairments or have some form of sight loss. Light sensitivity is where the light level in the environment is too bright and causes discomfort. For some, this discomfort can be significant and further reduce their useable vision and for others, they may only be affected by very bright light. Photophobia is not a visual impairment, but a symptom of many other visual conditions such as albinism, aniridia, macular degeneration and cataracts.

General strategies

- ✦ Avoid bright sunlight or other harsh lighting sources.
- ✦ Wear sunglasses with a UV filter or have photochromic lenses which get darker in brighter conditions
- ✦ Wide brimmed hats or baseball style hats to cut down on glare.
- ✦ For pupils who wear glasses, in bright sunlight they could have polarised lenses, which provide extra protection against glare-causing surfaces.
- ✦ When moving from brighter to darker areas and vice versa or switching lights on or off, give the child time for their eyes to adjust to the change in lighting levels.
- ✦ Ensure there is good ambient lighting in the rooms that the children are working in and if necessary, provide a task light for activities such as reading.
- ✦ Ensure that when seated in the classroom, the child is sat with their back facing windows.
- ✦ Classroom blinds can be used to reduce bright light.
- ✦ Be aware of the bright light emitted from computer screens. This brightness may need to be reduced for prolonged working or the child may need to spend shorter periods of time looking at the screen.