



Down Syndrome and Vision

What does this mean?

- CYP with DS have poorer vision than that of their peers. They are likely to have poorer quality cornea and lens optics and this contributes to poor acuity. This applies to DS CYP who have no other eye defects and includes children wearing their glasses.
- They find it difficult to shift visual attention as their eyes are less able to accommodate quickly from distance to near vision
- They are 10 times more likely to have refractive errors so
- 60% children with DS wear glasses
- 6% of all children wear glasses.



Implications for Learning

- All CYP with DS have a focussing error even when they wear glasses to correct long and short sightedness. They see slightly less detail, poorer colour, less contrast.
- Near tasks are blurred for most children with DS when detail is small.
- They find complex visual tasks difficult- especially shifting attention as their eyes have a reduced ability to accommodate from near to distance.

Ways to Help

- Remember BIG and BOLD
- BOLD information remains but faint information is missed for example –pencil lines may disappear completely. Pupils should have exercises books with bold well spaced lines – always avoid blue lines.
- Visual materials should have good contrast – increase the contrast – i.e bold black on white on yellow
- Text should be no smaller than N 18 – **this is N18** – use a clear font such as arial.
- Visual materials should be uncluttered and have less detail
- Sentences and paragraphs should be well spaced
- Avoid colour photographs copied in black and white
- Move closer to the front of the group or the focal point.
- Use pens with strong contrast – felt tip, not pencil
- On the whiteboard use – larger text and emphasize key words in different colours but avoid using blue and green together - use strong contrast
- Reduce the amount of text to be copied or provide an individual printed copy on the child's desk.
- Encourage children to consistently wear their glasses and to keep them clean – they may often wear bi-focals to help them accommodate.

Other resources;

www.berkshiresensoryconsortium.co.uk

www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/downs-syndrome-vision-research-unit/research>

Related Sheets:

- Wearing glasses well
- Myopia
- Hypermetropia