



Team for Children with Visual Impairments

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Advice on what to do if a child is wearing a patch in your class

Two main guidelines to follow:

Guideline 1.

If the child is wearing a patch for 1 - 2 hours per day in school, then follow the inclusive classroom practices, detailed on the back of this sheet. This will help to meet his/her need. It is not necessary to refer the child to the Team, however, if you have any concerns, you are welcome to ring the team for further advice.

Guideline 2.

If the child is wearing a patch for between 3 and 6 hours per day, then we strongly advise, that having sought permission from parents/carers, you refer the child to the Team, on the above number. A child that is wearing a patch for between 3 to 6 hours per day, most certainly will have a range of visual needs that will require addressing. Their access to the curriculum will be severely affected.

Why does a child need to wear a patch?

When a child wears a patch over one eye, this means that:

- the muscles of the **unpatched** eye are not strong
- as a result, the eye has developed a squint, which means that the eyes don't point in the same direction, the squint can alternate between the left and the right eye.
- the weaker, unpatched eye, is being forced to work by the brain.

Don't be fooled.....

Just because you can see the eye that isn't patched, doesn't mean that the child can see out of the eye. They are very likely to have:

- Poor distance vision – affecting ability to see the board, wall displays, friends on the playground.
- Poor near vision – affecting ability to read text, handwrite neatly on the line and read back.
- Blurred, foggy vision which will further affect their ability to see anything clearly, both near. or at a distance.

What happens if the child doesn't comply with the patching regime?

Squints cause double vision and the brain attempts to avoid the confusion by starting to ignore the squinting eye. This can result in a lazy eye, called amblyopia, which can be a permanent weakness if not corrected by the age of eight.

Inclusive classroom strategies to support a child wearing a patch.

Seeing writing on the board

- Sit child at the front, to the left or right of the centre, depending on which eye is patched, to enable best view of board, without head turn. To the left of centre, if right eye is patched, to the right of centre, if the left eye is patched.
- Teacher to use black pen to write clearly laid out information, presented in large text.
- Verbalise what is written on the board, pointing to the words as they are referred too.

Seeing small objects at a distance....

- Allow the child to look more closely at small objects being shown to the whole class.
- Allow the child to walk up to a wall display to distinguish detail.

Finding friends.....

- Ensure child is able to locate friends on the playground at a distance.

Taking part in PE.....

- Use a coloured ball in PE
- Bring child to front row, to ensure they can see your demonstration.
- Verbalise and physically demonstrate the activity at the same time.

Writing.....

- Provide black lined paper and black squared paper for the child to write on.
- Provide a black pen for the child to write with.
- Write your marks, comments in black pen. (felt type)

Reading.....

- Use a line marker, under the line, to help the child keep their place.
- Use a sloped desk.
- Use a line occluder. (occludes all text apart from the one being read)
- Make sure all worksheets are legible and of good contrast, with a minimum of visual clutter.
- Never expect a child to share a text book.
- Let the child work as close to the page, adopting whatever head position they want.

Coping with the visual fatigue of wearing a patch.....

- Give the child rest breaks, the fatigue of looking through one poor eye is huge!
- Give the child enough time to finish a task, or shorten the task, it will take them longer to do tasks when the patch is on.

And remember..... most importantly.....

Glasses do not fully correct the vision, for a child who is wearing a patch.