

Case Study 1: Supporting visual impairments

Clifford teaches geography in a secondary school in Nakuru, Kenya. He set an exam for his students and when he marked it he realised that Molly had done much worse than he expected. Next time he took the books in, he realised that a lot of her work was unfinished.

In the next few lessons, he watched Molly carefully. He realised that she was very slow in copying information, looked at her friend's books a lot and squinted her eyes when she was looking at the chalkboard. After the lesson he asked her if she was OK, and whether she could see the chalkboard properly. She admitted that it was difficult. Clifford called her parents in and discussed the issue with them. He suggested that she was sent to another school – a special school for children with visual impairments. They were very alarmed, as the only school was a long way away and they could not afford for Molly to be a boarder.

When Clifford thought about it more carefully, he realised that there were things he could do to support Molly himself. He invited her to sit at the front and talked to her and three of her friends about how they could all support Molly in the lesson. The students organised a fundraising sale: they all cooked little treats and sold them in the school. With the money, Clifford went to a printing company in the town and arranged for some revision sheets to be photocopied in a large font so that Molly could read them. He also made sure that his writing on the chalkboard was clear, and he organised his lessons so that there was more discussion, with students answering and asking questions, rather than copying. He found that this approach benefitted not just Molly but all the students.

When he talked to the teachers who taught Molly the previous year, he realised that this was a new problem. He also realised that Molly's other teachers needed to be aware of the issue, so he organised a short meeting one break to discuss how to help Molly. There was initially some resistance, as some teachers thought she should be removed from the school, but when they saw how much happier she was, and how her friends were able to support her, they started to do some of the things that Clifford suggested. Clifford encouraged Molly's parents to take her to a doctor and get a diagnosis of her condition so that she could get proper help. He also asked them to look at her schoolwork in the evenings and check that she was happy with what she had been doing. Molly was given a magnifying glass by a local charity, and the school got a visit from a teacher who specialises in supporting visually impaired students who was able to give them more practical ideas for how to support Molly.