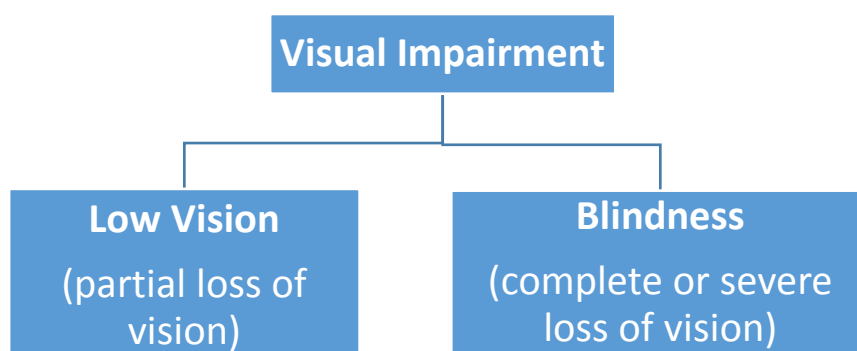


## 10. Visual Impairment

Visual impairment is a broad term used to describe the complete or partial loss of vision.



The biggest challenges most children with visual impairment face are:

- Moving around independently
- Understanding and using non-verbal communication (facial expressions and body language)
- Reading and writing

It is important to realise that children who are born blind (or with very limited vision) or lost their vision at a very early age have different needs, and face different barriers, than children who have lost their vision later during their childhood.



### What can you do in your role as a teacher to support pupils with visual impairments?

Remember that no two pupils are the same, and be prepared to try different approaches to find out what works best for each pupil.

- Select books with good print quality and layout. Text that is left-aligned (with an even left margin, and an uneven right margin) is easier for children with low vision to read, and also benefits other children who struggle with reading.
- Try to find books in Braille for pupils who depend on Braille for reading and writing.
- Seat pupils with visual impairment so that they can hear well because they will depend on their hearing more than most other children. Ask individual children where in the classroom is best for them to hear.
- Seat pupils with low vision so that they can maximise the use of their residual vision, but make sure that they are not blinded by too much light. Many children with visual impairment feel bothered by light, but others will benefit from light because it helps them with mobility. Again, it is essential to ask individual children what is best for them.
- Keep the seating arrangements fixed for children with visual impairment so that they can orient themselves and find their way around independently.
- Important objects in the classroom (e.g. books, learning materials) should not be moved around too much.

- Read everything that is written on the blackboard aloud and slowly.
- Try to speak while facing the pupils (not away from them) because children with visual impairment need to hear you clearly.
- Involve other children in the class to help out. Explaining a visual concept to a person who cannot see is an interesting challenge for a sighted person, and can help to develop their own understanding.
- Encourage the class to think about how to include their friends with visual impairment in physical education programmes. It is important that children as well as teachers are involved in helping to include all pupils in school life.
- Produce tactile learning materials, for example a map made of materials with different textures.
- Use real objects that pupils can feel and handle, such as bean bags, counters and pencils.
- Allow pupils with visual impairment enough time to complete tasks – for example writing in Braille takes much longer than writing with pen and paper.

## Reference:

Adapted from: UNESCO (2015), *Teaching Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings*, Bangkok: UNESCO

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001829/182975e.pdf>

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