

NHS Special School Eye Care Service

PARENT/CARER SERVICE INFORMATION

Introduction

NHS England, who oversee the NHS, have committed to transforming eye care and vision checks for children and young people (up to 25 years of age) in special schools in England, by delivering a **free service on the school premises** which will include an eye examination and the supply and fitting of 2 pairs of glasses for every child who needs them.



Research has shown that children with a learning disability and/or autism are 28x more likely to experience challenges with sight and eye health.

Despite this greater need, most children have to attend a hospital eye department for routine services and over 40% have no history of eye care provision.

Why is an eye check important for my child?

Some children may not know they have a sight problem or may not be able to tell people about a change in their vision.

Uncorrected vision can lead to lack of participation in activities or difficulty walking because the environment looks blurred.

Therefore, it's recommended that all children have their eyes checked every year, or more often if needed, to identify the condition of their sight.

No child is too disabled to have their eyes checked as you don't have to be able to read or speak to have an eye check.

An eye check looks at the health of the eye and its vision as well as determining if glasses are needed.



Tell me more about the service and why it would benefit my child?

Please watch the 10 minute information film about the service by clicking [here](#) which includes:

- 3 parents with their child describing how it has changed their lives
- how it equips school staff to better support your child's education and development
- the benefits of delivering the service on the school premises
- what the Special School Eye Care Service Team does



Who carries out the eye checks?

The Eye Care Team is made up of clinicians who have received additional training to deliver eye checks and dispense glasses to children with learning disabilities and/or autism. In most cases the service will be delivered by an optometrist and dispensing optician, but other clinicians may also contribute:

- **Optometrists** will examine the child's eyes to check they are healthy and see whether glasses would be beneficial
- **Dispensing Opticians** will take the facial measurements and facial characteristics of the children who need glasses to make sure they fit properly and are comfortable to wear
- **Orthoptists** diagnose and treat defects in eye movement and problems with how the eyes work together
- **Ophthalmologists** specialise in the diagnoses and treatment of serious eye conditions and would usually be seen in a hospital.

What happens before the eye check?

Your child's school will send you two forms before an appointment is made:

Service Participation and Opt-Out

Every child is able to receive this service but if you wish your child to Opt-Out, this form will enable you to let us know of your choice.

About My Child's Eyes

This parent/carer questionnaire asks for information about your child's eye health history and other relevant questions and will be used by the Eye Care Team to ensure the service they give you is tailored to your child's specific needs. The Eye Care Team need to receive this from you *before* seeing your child.

What happens during the eye check?

The Eye Care Team will deliver the service on the school premises and your child will be accompanied by a chaperone the whole time. You are welcome to attend your child's appointment if you wish. Your child will be helped to feel safe and comfortable during the appointment. There are lots of different checks for children of all abilities and we will look at:

- how well their eyes focus and whether they need to wear glasses
- how well they see
- how well their eyes work together and move
- the health of their eyes.

Using eye drops (cyclopentolate) in the eye check

During the appointment, the **Optometrist** may need to put drops in your child's eyes. The drops are used to check if glasses are needed. Most children do not have any side effects, but some may find that afterwards, bright light is uncomfortable, or vision is blurry because the drops cause the pupils to get larger (dilate). For most, these side effects will wear off after a few hours but it can take up to 24 hours. The About My Child's Eyes questionnaire asks for your permission to use the drops. If you have any questions, please use the contact details below.

What happens after the eye check?

The Eye Care Team will write a report written in plain English about what has been found shortly after the test which you and the school will receive.



If your child needs glasses, the **Dispensing Optician** will prescribe two pairs in case of breakages at no cost to you. Often, specialist glasses are required which the Eye Care Team will have knowledge of and be able to provide.

Depending on the outcome of the appointment, the Team may need to refer your child to other eye health professionals for further checks and may occasionally need to see your child before their annual check. We will advise you if either of these steps are necessary.

Can my child have their eyes checked if they already wear glasses or have an existing eye or sight problem?

It is not necessary for your child to have another test if you already go to a hospital or opticians. If this is the case, please let us know through the **About My Child's Eyes** questionnaire mentioned above. If your child is already under a hospital eye department, you should continue to attend these appointments.

When will my child's school have this service?

The ambition is to have this service present in every special school in England. Before it is implemented across the entire country, we are testing and refining how the service works with some schools and clinicians to make sure all components can be delivered effectively and efficiently.

In the meantime, we would like to hear from schools who would be interested in adopting this service at england.specialschoolseyecareservice@nhs.net so we can get in touch with them when the service comes to their area.

“ This [the service] is part of our ‘one-stop shop’ approach...For parents, this is an improvement where they were previously having to take [their] child down to the opticians, the opticians not understanding how to diagnose [their] child, and know that something was wrong, but then not being able to do anything about it.

We’ve seen a remarkable transformation of how our pupils learn – but also, go and talk to the parents! They’re absolutely blown away by the fact that their children now have glasses. ”

*Russell Davey, Headteacher
The Village School, London*