

## **Supporting your vision impaired child with transition from primary to secondary school**

Transition can be an exciting but worrying time for vision impaired children and their families. Due to school closures and the delay in children returning to school, there are now even more questions and concerns about how your child can transition.

Here are abbreviations you may well hear:

**CYP** – Child or Young Person

**EHCP** – Education Health and Care Plan

**QTVI** – Qualified Teacher of children with a Vision Impairment

**SENDCo** – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator

### **Have a school place, what next?**

Once your child has received their place at secondary school, which is normally around March, you should be contacted by the QTVI or SENDCo to discuss the transition plan for your child.

This may well be carried out virtually due to the current restrictions which are in place around social distancing and shielding.

Your child's EHCP will need to be reviewed, however during the current pandemic there are relaxations around EHCPs due to the Coronavirus Act 2020 - [Gov.UK Covid19](https://www.gov.uk/covid-19). Next announcement due 30<sup>th</sup> June on EHCP and SEND.

For support on EHCP and to view model plans visit the [NatSip](https://www.natsip.org.uk) website for examples.

## **Mobility and Orientation**

Working with your local Habilitation team on what support is available is vital. You can encourage your child to travel their route to school during the summer holidays, so that they can gain confidence with the route. It may not be possible or appropriate for this to happen during the current social distancing rules in place, as your child might not have received their route training.

Learning routes within the school can be daunting and support will be needed for this. Allow extra time to get from lesson to lesson. Your child will need support in locating classrooms, the dining room, outside spaces, toilets and where their specialist equipment is stored.

If you have concerns around your child's habilitation, either for routes to school or around the school, contact [Habilitation UK](#) and/or [Guide Dogs](#).

You can also explore whether your child can have access to orientation training within the school setting to support them to gain confidence navigating around the school.

## **Working with a new school**

Secondary SENDCos should be liaising with the VI service and those who have supported your child through the primary setting. Having good communication between the primary SENDCo and secondary SENDCo is important during the transition period.

To establish the best learning methods for your child, QTVIs will undertake a functional vision assessment. You can also explore topics around the timetable your child will have and how much support they will need to complete their work. Considerations about levels of homework and deadlines need to be explored with the school. It may be that you discuss whether the curriculum is suitable to your child.

Schools may receive a visual management profile about your child. This has strategies and advice on how to support your child. Included in this information will be your child's eye condition and how it impacts them. It details their preferences and requirements. It may also contain information on social and emotional support requirements.

If your child is learning Braille, you may want to better understand how this will happen and discuss this with your child's QTVI. Other considerations include whether learning materials will be available in Braille, and how will this be carried out.

For children who use specialist equipment exploring who maintains this, and is responsible for it, will be useful. Establish if your child will have a locker or other secure place to store their equipment, which is easily accessible to them. It is also important to determine if the equipment is allowed home to support with homework or home learning.

It is likely your child will also have additional curriculum activities to complete with support from QTVIs which may cover topics like using specialist equipment, emotional well-being, or daily living skills.

It may be possible for visual awareness training to be delivered to teachers and other professionals who will be working with your child.

### **Adapting to a new setting**

Schools can look to provide a support system, through offering an older child as a buddy, which can support your child to adjust to the new school and help them make new friends if they do not know other students at that school.

Creating a safe and fun space during breaktimes can be helpful for children to mix and join in on activities.

Some establishments provide a student passport, which has key information relating to your child. It can be shared with teachers and staff in advance so they can be prepared and plan. These passports aren't used in all settings.

The current introduction of social distancing may assist vision impaired children. Staggered lunch breaks, one-way systems, and staggered break times may help in the transition to a new school.

Moving to a new school can be daunting for any child. There is information on managing and supporting with anxiety on [Mentalhealth.org.uk](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk) which includes guidance for pupils and teachers for students with SEND.

## Social Distancing

You may have concerns around how your child will adjust into a new school with social distancing. The Government has provided advice on this to schools to protect both students and staff. These include:

1. Reducing the size of classes and keeping the children in small groups, without mixing with others.
2. Setting staggered break and lunch times as well as staggered drop off and pick up times.
3. Reduce the use of shared items within the school.

Professional guidance provided by

VIEW, the representative body for QTVIs, has produced this [Guidance](#) for professionals.

The Government's official advice has changed to now having all children return in September instead in June 2020, as initially planned. Risk assessments will still be undertaken for children with EHCPs and you and your child should be involved in this process.

If you require more support and guidance contact [cypf@pocklington-trust.org.uk](mailto:cypf@pocklington-trust.org.uk)