

Physical Education

General Points for consideration

These are a few considerations for all students with visual impairments.

- Try to ensure that the lighting conditions match the needs of your visually impaired (VI) pupil. This includes in changing rooms as well as sports halls.
- Bear in mind that a VI pupil's vision can vary from day to day according to light levels, fatigue and stress.
- All PE equipment the VI pupil uses should be well contrasted, for example, balls should be highly visible against backgrounds, team members should wear team bibs in oppositely contrasted colours (e.g. bright pink verses dark blue). There is a range of specialist equipment available from both the RNIB and in mainstream PE catalogues and some can be loaned from the visual impairment service.
- **Always keep in verbal contact with VI pupils.** It is important that VI students are addressed by name when something is about to happen, do not assume that they will pick up on body language and be able to tell, for example, when something is about to be thrown, it is important that when passing balls (by foot or hand) the sender calls out the receiver's name to make them aware of what is happening. A consequence of this is that **background noise levels should remain low** so that the person can hear their name being called.
- **Ensure that safety rules are known and followed by all members of the group.** Whilst it is important to be sensitive to the students' feelings about others in the group knowing about their difficulty; from a purely health and safety point of view, it is important that the group realise where problems may lie.
- It will take more time for any person with a visual impairment to master new skills for example, learning how to pace out a run up is a skill that requires instruction and consequently, extra opportunities to practise need to be provided.
- A visually impaired player will find participating in sport much more physically and mentally tiring than his sighted peers.
- Whilst maximum participation should be encouraged, there will be occasions when, if a student really feels they cannot cope in a situation, opting out to practise a skill or doing something completely different – such as using the fitness suite – is entirely appropriate.

Team Games

Large team games will cause problems for someone with a visual impairment as reduced vision will mean that they will not be as aware of team members moving or

balls coming at them unexpectedly from all angles. It may be more appropriate for them to participate in skills sessions and, wherever possible, the teacher should provide opportunities for a small scale team game each week, possibly on a rotation basis, so that a child does not miss out on team experiences. Past experience has shown that there are generally several students in any given group who prefer to play in this way. There are many pupils who might say they want to join in but please remember that they will be in a state of hyper awareness and anxiety.

Track events

Pupils should be able to participate in track events relatively well, although crowding when running in groups may be an issue and ***hurdlings will not be appropriate*** as they cannot see the bar as they come close to it. Having a guide runner to follow often helps.

Field events

Pupils will be able to participate in throwing field events although they will probably struggle to see far enough to retrieve thrown objects. Other students must be aware of health and safety rules concerning throwing as a visually impaired student will not see stray objects thrown towards them.

Where jumping events are concerned, students may be able to participate in high jump if they can pace it out and practice first. For long jump the main problem will be not seeing the take off board once they are close to it; one option is to mark the take off area with a scattering of sand or talcum powder and then measure from the mark where the foot hits the board. Pupils should also be allowed to pace out their run up. Another option is to introduce the standing long jump as an occasional event.

Striking and fielding games

Some aspects of these games will be more accessible than others. There will be difficulty with striking small balls e.g. in rounders, tennis and cricket, however using high contrast balls will help students to track them.

Most visually impaired students are able to bowl quite successfully although their ability to field will be limited.

It is not advisable for VI pupils to play tennis in pairs due to the risk of being hit, or hitting others with the racket. When playing in an area with a lot of pupils it is preferable to put the VI student at the end of the row. Badminton is always particularly hard for the VI pupils because although it is possible to obtain high contrast shuttle cocks, the shuttle cock presents a very small, and fast moving target that will be against a changing contrasting background.

Apart from using high contrast balls, adaptations to these forms of games may include 'soft tennis' using foam balls; allowing a pupil to self serve rounders and cricket balls using either a tennis racquet or a ball on a stand rather than hitting a bowled ball.

Gymnastics, dance and fitness.

Obviously, when inside, groups of people moving around will present a problem to VI students and their ability to cope will depend on their confidence in crowds, clearly defined working areas will help.

With trampoline work, they may not be aware of how close to the edge of the bed they are getting and so will need verbal direction from the spotters if they start to stray from the middle.

Caution is needed with activities that require jumping over low objects such as benches, however objects like vaults should be okay provided they can pace out the length of the run up first. In all cases, the apparatus should be well contrasted against its background.

Swimming

Most VI students is much worse without their glasses, to preserve health and safety they will need to continue wearing their glasses until just before they enter the water.

The main area of difficulty that arises is bumping into the wall at the end, especially if moving at speed or practicing racing turns. The usual method to overcome this is to have a 'buddy' at the end of the pool who holds a pole with a foam ball on the end; as the swimmer gets to about two to three strokes away the buddy taps them on the head with the ball warning them to stop or start to turn