



Special School Eye Care Service

Introduction

NHS England have committed to transforming eye care and vision checks for children and young people 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 a pair 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 at all.

Will it cost me anything?

The short answer is no. The eye test and provision of glasses will be provided at no cost to yourselves. If the child loses or breaks the glasses, replacement glasses will also be provided free of charge.

Why is an eye test 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 with mobility because their environment looks blurred.

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

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

An eye test is an eye health check as well as checking if glasses are needed.

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

Please scan the QR code below to watch the 10-minute information film about the service 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 tests?

The Eye Care Team is made up of Opticians who have received additional training to deliver sight tests and dispense glasses to children with learning disabilities and/or autism.

- **Optometrists** examine the child's eyes to check they are healthy and see whether glasses would be beneficial and they are also qualified to dispense glasses.
- **Dispensing Opticians** can 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, they would be usually seen in a hospital setting
- **Ophthalmologists** specialise in the diagnoses and treatment of serious eye conditions and would usually be seen in a hospital.

What happens before the test?

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 (AMCE form)

This asks for information about your child's eye health history and other relevant questions and will be used by the School Opticians to ensure the service is tailored to your child's specific needs. The School Optician / Eye care Team need to receive this before seeing your child.

What happens during the eye test?

The School Optician / Eye Care Team will deliver the service on the school premises and your child will usually be accompanied by a school staff member. You are welcome to attend your child's appointment if you wish. Your child will be helped to feel safe and comfortable during the test. There are lots of different tests for children of all abilities and we will check:

- 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 test

During the eye test, the **Optometrist** may (on occasion) 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 test?

The School Optician / 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 **School Optician / Eye Care Team** will prescribe a pair of glasses, at no cost to you. Often, specialist glasses are required which the School Optician / Eye Care Team will have knowledge of and be able to provide.

Depending on the outcome of the appointment, the School Optician / Eye Care 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 tested if they already go to a high street Optician or hospital eye department?

It is not necessary for your child to have another test if you already go to a hospital or high street opticians. Equally, if you would rather your child's eye care was looked after in this school service, they are more than welcome to get tested. If this is the case, please let us know through the **About My Child's Eyes** questionnaire mentioned above. IMPORTANT: 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.

'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