

# The Social Curriculum

**Enhancing self-esteem**

**Facilitating friendships**

**Communicating meaning**

**Break / lunch times / change  
of lessons**

**Extra-curricular activities**

**It is an expectation that all young people with a visual impairment are included in the whole life of the school.**

This requires additional planning, preparation and forethought.

**Issues of concern:**

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Facilitating friendships
- Communication meaning
- Break/lunch times
- Extra-curricular activities

## **Enhancing self-esteem**

### **Challenges**

Young people with a Visual impairment may:

- Have very low self-esteem
- Experience emotional issues regarding the understanding and acceptance of their visual impairment
- Feel socially and emotionally restricted by the support they receive
- Have delayed emotional development

### **Strategies**

- Encourage the development of independence
- Address the young person directly, not the support worker
- Have an awareness of the young person's possible need for counselling
- Discover, recognise and reward the child's strengths
- Provide opportunities for choices and decision making, e.g. selecting size, type and colour of font, foreground and background.

- Provide accessible information in appropriate formats, e.g. progress files, merit certificates, rewards, letters to parents, posters
- Use Circle Time opportunities for sharing
- Facilitate opportunities for young people with a visual impairment to meet other young people with a visual impairment
- Encourage the whole group or class to experience using specialised equipment.
- Raise awareness of all staff of the young person's needs to come to terms with their visual impairment
- Be aware of naivety often expressed by some young people with a visual impairment

## Facilitating friendships

### Challenges:

Young people with a visual impairment may have difficulty making and maintaining lasting friendships

- Non-verbal communication is not fully available to students with little or no sight e.g. facial and body gestures
- Sighted peers can misinterpret lack of gestures, body language and mannerisms by young people with a visual impairment
- Social interactions can be hindered by lack of vision, e.g. when trying to locate groups of friends
- Difficulties arise from not knowing whether to initiate a conversation, when to join in, when to take turns and when to stop. This occurs as a result of the lack of non-verbal cues.

## Strategies

Provide opportunities for young people with a visual impairment to:

- Have access to all shared activities ensuring appropriate levels of support
- Share what it is like to have little or no sight, if appropriate
- Be taught how to use appropriate body language
- Provide opportunities for young people with vision to become aware and able to understand some of the needs of young people with a visual impairment in daily living
- Experience the difficulties of mobility, interaction and working with limited or no vision
- Access practical training in using appropriate techniques when assisting young people with a visual impairment
- Recognise and understand the strengths of their peers with a visual impairment

## Communicating meaning

### Challenges

Young people with a visual impairment may:

- Not understand instructions unless they are verbally explicit
- Miss out on information on wall displays, posters and notice boards
- Miss important information such as fire exit signs, danger signs (environmental access also)
- Not be aware of incidental occurrences
- Be prone to repeating something they have heard regardless of whether they understand it or not
- Not always display conventional body language

## **Strategies**

- When addressing any young person – say their name first
- Teachers should say out loud what they are writing on the board (this benefits other young people also)
- All practical lessons need to be verbally explained e.g. scientific experiments
- Ensure young people are informed verbally of critical information and signage
- Spontaneous laughter and disturbances need to be explained
- Check understanding of concepts by careful questioning
- Be aware that young people with a visual impairment may need to be reminded to locate and turn towards a speaker

## **Break/lunch times/change of lessons**

### **Challenges**

- Bullying
- Isolation
- Not understanding the routine
- Menus
- Where the queue starts and ends
- Noise (dining room)
- Toilets
- Vigorous play and speed of movement of other young people on the playground or in the corridors
- Changing quickly for PE

## **Strategies**

- Assign peer mentors
- Structured referral system in which the young person with a visual impairment knows the procedures in relation to bullying
- Support staff/teachers to be around at lunchtime to identify socially isolated young people
- Established lunchtime routines, menus need to be in large print, Braille or explained by someone
- Making known which queue is which and where the queue starts
- Provision of a base or quiet social area with seating
- Familiarisation of bathroom layout and supervision of area as appropriate
- Accessible activities to be provided e.g. lunchtime chess club, gardening club, games adapted/adjusted for young people with a visual impairment if required

## **Extra-curricular activities**

### **Challenges**

- Provision of appropriate support
- Access to activities
- Staff understanding the visual and mobility needs of the young person
- Transport
- Health and Safety issues

### **Strategies**

- Provide activities to extend the experiences of the young person, build confidence and support the development of peer friendships
- Give opportunities for challenges and achievements encouraging success, fun and enjoyment

## The Social Curriculum – Bury Vision Impairment Education Service

- Allow extra time for the young person with a visual impairment to explore, investigate, and learn new activities
- Encourage young people with a visual impairment to develop personal challenge strategies, when participating in activities, facilitating the achievement of their own personal best
- Be aware that mainstream young people with a visual impairment could benefit from socialising with other young people with similar visual needs
- Provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Allow “time out” if possible. A young person with a visual impairment may be more tired than their sighted peers at the end of a school day due to visual fatigue
- Invest in V.I. friendly equipment (as advised by Specialist staff)
- Prepare specific risk assessment relating to visual impairment (as advised by Specialist Staff)

### **Remember**

*No two young people are the same.*

*Every young person with a visual impairment has unique needs and strengths.*

## Case study

### Sunny

### aged 17

*It's great when people discreetly intersperse their contribution to a conversation with information on what is happening around us.*

*It's frustrating when the pelican crossing isn't working and I can't make my own way into college.*

*It's frustrating when I am in a room and no one tells me who is there.*

*When people say, "I wish I had a laptop like yours!" I want to reply "I will gladly swap it for your vision!"*

*It is difficult to avoid headaches, back and neck ache when I am working for any length of time.*

*I had a good laugh with my family when I told them I'd been asked to clean the windows on work experience. I can't see windows!*