

## Plain language highlights of research and evidence relating to education for children and young people with vision impairment in the United Kingdom.

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- Across the UK there are an estimated [41,000 children and young people](#) (CYP) aged 0-25 with a vision impairment (V I). The population of CYP with V I can be thought of as two distinct sub-populations: those with and those without additional needs. [Evidence](#) indicates that around half of CYP with a V I, in England, have an additional need and/or disability that has implications for learning and development.
- Accessing education and support for CYP with V I can be complex in a system where specialist V I education services are under increasing pressure. Data from local authorities across the UK reveals a pattern of inconsistent funding, with budgets fluctuating year-on-year due to spending cuts or freezes, resulting in variation in provision that puts CYP with V I at risk of not receiving the support they are entitled to.
- In the UK, the majority of CYP with V I attend mainstream schools ([RNIB, 2023](#)). V I is a low incidence, high needs disability, meaning mainstream teachers have limited opportunities to develop knowledge and experience of the impact of V I on learning and how to best support students. Access to support and training from V I specialist education professionals to develop best practice in meeting the needs of CYP with V I would promote equitable access to learning and the wider educational activities.
- Inclusive education for CYP with V I is facilitated by balancing universal inclusive practice, with specialist interventions. Specialist skills approaches and skills development, specific to CYP with V I and taught by Qualified Teachers of Children and Young People with V I, are fundamental to providing full access to the curriculum and for the development of personal agency and independence. Without access to specialist skills teaching,

CYP with V I are at risk of not being equipped to participate fully and thrive in education, employment and adult life.

- At present, there is no single statutory specialist curriculum framework for CYP with V I in the UK, which can lead to a lack of clarity about what should be taught, when and by whom. The [Curriculum Framework for Children with V I](#) was launched in 2022 to define the specialist skill development, interventions and best practice support that are essential for CYP with V I. There is a sector-wide call for the framework to gain statutory status and be adopted in national and local policy.
- Assessment outcomes at each stage of education show a consistent and significant attainment gap between CYP with V I and children without SEN or disability. This may reflect inadequacies in mainstream and specialist support and curriculum access. Conversely, [recent GCSE data \(2022\)](#) show that pupils with V I as their primary SEN were one of the highest performing SEN groups, with 58% achieving grade 4 and above in English and 39.4% achieving grade 5 and above for Maths.
- Research evidence suggests that students with V I often experience feelings of being over-looked and not belonging at school and encounter difficulties in forming and maintaining social relationships with peers and teachers. This often stems from low confidence due to their lack of vision which limits social interaction and participation in academic activities.
- When a young person transitions to post-16 education the support they receive often diminishes, with each local authority or HE institution operating its own policy of inclusive practice and specialist support. Commonly reported barriers to inclusion include: a lack of academic support, difficulty accessing lectures and course materials; inadequate library resources; and limited provision of reasonable adjustments.
- Transitions between all stages of education is a key area in which CYP with V I experience challenges. Transition should be viewed as an ongoing process, not a single moment in time, and should be centred around the aspirations, interests and needs (educational, emotional, developmental and social) of the child or young person to ensure successful transition and preparation for adulthood.
- Several topics would benefit from greater research in the UK: largescale qualitative studies to understand how CYP with V I experience mainstream

primary and secondary schooling; systematic evaluation of inclusive teaching practices and reasonable adjustments in all phases of education; how CYP with V I experience the primary to secondary school transition process; and the factors that positively and/or negatively influence teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with V I.

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