



RE: Update on Visual Support Strategies in School

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to share an **important update regarding how we support students who experience visual stress, particularly in relation to the use of coloured paper.**

As part of our commitment to our SEND ethos, ‘**Learning Without Limits, Removing Barriers**’, we regularly review our practices to ensure they reflect the most effective and inclusive approaches. Following a review of current research and educational best practice, **we are refining our provision and will no longer routinely provide coloured paper as a classroom support strategy.**

While coloured paper has been used in the past to support students with visual processing difficulties, recent **evidence suggests its impact on learning outcomes is limited.** Instead, **we are focusing on more effective, personalised strategies that better meet individual needs.**

Visual stress, sometimes referred to as Meares-Irlen Syndrome, can cause symptoms such as visual distortions, headaches, and eye strain when reading.

Research now indicates that coloured overlays offer a more flexible and



tailored solution. These overlays can be adjusted to suit each student's specific needs, making them a more effective long-term support tool. A 2024 review by DyslexicHelp.org highlights that **overlays can significantly reduce visual stress and improve reading fluency, especially when selected based on individual preferences.**

Our priority remains the academic success and well-being of all students. For those who may benefit from overlays or tinted lenses, **we recommend a professional assessment through an optician.** While we do not endorse specific providers, we are happy to signpost families to local services that currently offer **in-person Colorimetry Testing and Visual Stress Assessments:**

Provider: Sheinman Opticians – Northampton (www.sheinman.com)

Service Offered: Intuitive Colorimetry assessments to determine whether precision tinted lenses may help alleviate visual stress. A full eye examination is required before the Colorimetry test. The Colorimetry assessment currently costs £120.

Contact Details:

- Address: Turville House, 106–110 Abington Street, Northampton, NN1 2BP
- Telephone: 01604 626161



Provider - Kingsthorpe Eyecare – Northampton (www.opticseyecare.co.uk)

Service Offered: Visual stress assessments, including the use of coloured overlays. Patients can trial different overlay colours during the assessment.

If beneficial, the selected tint can be incorporated into reading glasses.

Contact Details:

- Address: 4 Kingsthorpe Centre, Harborough Road, Northampton, NN2 7BD
- Telephone: 01604 716000

Online screening tools are also available for families who wish to explore initial signs of visual stress at home:

Provider – ReadEZ (<https://readez.co.uk/test-yourself/>)

Service Offered – Offers a free online overlay test where users can try different virtual overlay colours on-screen to see if any reduce symptoms such as text movement, flickering, or discomfort. While this is not a substitute for a professional assessment, it can be a helpful first step in identifying potential visual stress.



Provider – Happy Eye (<https://www.happyeye.co.uk/visual-stress-test-3-w.asp>)

Service Offered – Provides online assessments and resources for visual stress and dyslexia support. Their tools are designed to help identify whether coloured overlays or tints may be beneficial, and they also offer guidance on next steps.

We will continue to provide screening and support for Dyslexia and other Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as required. Where a student has a **formal diagnosis or assessment recommending overlays, these will be provided as a reasonable adjustment where appropriate.** Requests can be made via the student's form tutor, who will liaise with our SEND team.

For students currently using coloured paper as part of their exam access arrangements, these provisions will remain in place for the remainder of this academic year to ensure continuity and fairness.

This change is part of our ongoing commitment to inclusive education and ensuring every student receives the support that works best for them. **We will always consider individual circumstances where there is a demonstrable need, and we remain dedicated to removing barriers to learning so that all students can thrive.**



Thank you for your continued support as we work together to uphold our vision of **'Learning Without Limits, Removing Barriers'**.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Gother

SENDCo

ABS-SENDCO@abbeyfieldschool.org.uk