

Why does my child need extra tests?

When the school screening checks were carried out, your child's results indicated that they may not have as good a level of vision as we would expect to find in their age group. Screening tests such as the school screening only capture basic information about a child's vision. Therefore, it is recommended that your child should have a full NHS vision assessment and sight test to further investigate the screening results. You may not have any concerns about your child's vision now, however children do not know if there is anything wrong with their vision- the way they see is normal to them. So even if they appear to have good vision it is worthwhile acting on this referral to make sure that your child can see as well as they should.

What do I need to do now?

Choose an Optical Practice from the list sent to you with this leaflet and contact them to make a Child's Vision Assessment appointment. Please make it clear that your child has been referred from School Vision Screening.

You will be asked for your child's unique PIN number that is at the top of the referral letter you have received. This PIN is very important, allowing the Optometrist access to your child's eye screening records and the ability to update information in those records.

How many times will my child need to be seen?

The first vision assessment and the sight test:

- may reveal that your child's vision is of an acceptable standard after all and they will be discharged from the service back to the care of your family Optometrist
- may reveal that your child needs spectacles for certain tasks or only for a short period. You will be given a spectacle prescription and advice on when the spectacles should be worn
- may indicate that your child needs further tests at the Hospital eye department. The Optometrist will arrange a referral for your child.

If your child is prescribed spectacles, an appointment will be made for 6 weeks after that to check that your child's vision is improving and that they are getting along with the spectacles.

At the 6 week check, if your child's vision has improved to a satisfactory level, they will be discharged from the service. If the vision needs more time to improve, a further appointment will be made for 12 weeks after that.

At the 18 week check, most children's vision will have improved to a satisfactory level. In a small number of cases the vision may not improve to a satisfactory level. In those circumstances, it is necessary for the optometrist to refer you child to the eye hospital.

If, at any of these visits your child's vision has improved to a satisfactory level, they will be discharged from the children's vision service back to the care of your usual family Optometrist.

It is important for all children to have regular sight tests to ensure that their eyes are healthy and to assess their vision- spectacle corrections can develop over time.

What will the vision assessment and sight test involve?

If you have had your own eyes examined, you will be able to reassure your child that there is nothing to be worried about. Sight tests are not painful and can be adapted to suit the needs of any child or adult.

The optometrist will explain all the tests on the day so that your child does not worry.

The optometrist will ask your child about what they can see and how their eyes feel and will ask you if any eye problems run in the family.

The vision will be checked with the same type of letters that were used at the school screening.

Simple tests, covering and uncovering the eyes, or following a target can check how the muscles of the eyes are working. They may use interesting books and targets to check how your child's eyes function.

Young children often have difficulty relaxing the focus of their eyes, therefore to determine an accurate measure of your child's eyes, drops are used to relax the focusing muscles. One or two drops will be put into each eye.

We can't deny it; the drops do sting a little. Optometrists often describe this to children as getting fizzy lemonade in your eye. This "fizzing" only lasts a short time.

As the drops take affect the pupils get bigger and the focussing muscles will be temporarily relaxed so all close work will be blurry. This will last for the rest of the day and, although the pupils sometimes stay bigger for longer, the vision should be back to normal the next day. The drops will take about 25-30 minutes to reach their full affect.

Once the drops have taken affect the testing frame will be put on, a light will be shone at the eyes, and lenses put into this frame to find out the focusing ability of the eyes. The optometrist can determine from this test whether spectacles will be required or not.

While the pupils are large, the optometrist can have a thorough look to see that the eyes are healthy.

They may use an instrument called a slit lamp. This looks like a large microscope. Your child will lean their chin on a rest, the optometrist will hold a small lens in front of their eye and a light will be shone through the lens at their eye. The other type of instrument shines a light from a special headset that the optometrist wears, directing this at the eye through a larger lens.

Both lights are quite bright but they cannot harm the eyes.

Additional tests may be used if the Optometrist thinks it is necessary.

As the pupils are larger your child may be a little light sensitive. They may wish to bring a hat or sunglasses for the journey home if it is a bright day.

If you have any questions or would like to talk to the Optometrist before the appointment, then please arrange to speak to the Optometrist when you make the appointment for your child.

Patient questionnaires

When your child is discharged from this service you will be asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire about the care your child and you have received from the Optical Practice and Optometrist. Please take a little time to complete this as it is important that we have your feedback on how well the service works and any improvements that we could consider.

Electronic Record Keeping

All information is recorded electronically and is kept securely. Your child's information will only be passed on to health practitioners/agencies involved in your child's care.