**Wirral Sensory Services**

**Braille Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure**

**Introduction**

Braille is a tactile writing and reading system used by people when they cannot see well enough to read print. There are two forms: Grade 1 and Grade 2. Grade 1 is a set of signs for the alphabet and punctuation; Grade 2 is much more complex with 189 signs and strict rules, a bit like shorthand. Learning to use Braille presents readers with many challenges over and above those already faced by pupils learning print.

Some pupils will have visual conditions which mean they are not able to access print so will enter school using non sighted means to access the curriculum.

When a pupil either has a deteriorating eye condition or loses their sight unexpectedly, the decision about whether and when to introduce the Braille code will be made in the light of individual assessment by a Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (QTVI) and consultation with the pupil, parents or carers and the school.

**Service Involvement**

Every pupil who needs to learn Braille will be supported by a QTVI who will:

* Assess individual needs and aptitudes to make sure they are ready to learn Braille
* Devise and implement a programme of Braille/pre-Braille activities
* Offer training for school or early years staff, parents and carers so that Braille can be used both at home and at school
* Continually assess and monitor each pupil to establish whether they need to learn Grade 1 or Grade 2 Braille, or a combination of the two. Some pupils may combine Braille with the use of large print and audio and other technologies.
* Provide reading schemes (produced by the RNIB), at these are specifically designed to introduce the Braille code. Supplement these with tactile books produced by the Service or sourced from Clear Vision, Living Paintings, National Library for the Blind
* Provide manual Braille writers and Braille paper for early learners and assess technology needs as the pupil’s skills develop
* Teach the pupil to read and write Braille twice a week from Key Stage 1 until s/he can use it independently to communicate
* Provide ongoing advice and support for school staff on adapting the curriculum appropriately e.g. use of real objects, production of tactile diagrams, etc.
* All pupils in mainstream will be supported by a Specialist Teaching Assistant who is qualified in braille or is working towards the [RNIB](file://s02vs-uenv07.core.wcent.wirral.gov.uk/RNIB) braille qualification.

# Guidelines For Schools - Part one: General / in class

1. Learning outcomes set for the class need to be the same for and fully inclusive of the Child, his/her route to reaching the learning outcomes will require adaptations and modifications to ensure accessibility.
2. High expectations need to be set based on his/her cognitive ability and not governed by his/her visual status. This is important in ensuring the Child is stretched academically and his/her potential is maximised.
3. Braille is a tool used by the Child to enable access; it should not create a barrier to learning. The Child may require more time to access Braille/tactile materials, to enable him/her to process the information and internalise concepts. This is due to the complexity of accessing information through tactile materials and is not connected to his cognitive ability.
4. The Child needs the same access to text as sighted children experience. The presence of Braille needs to sit inclusively and equally alongside other children’s print access.
5. If the other children are requested to read print as part of a task, the Child needs to have his/her own Braille version to access the same information at the same time. E.g. the Child should not be listening to learn when others are involved in learning through looking at/reading text.
6. All text needs to be adapted into Braille/tactile format according to the Child’s current level of Braille knowledge.
7. The Child’s level of Braille knowledge will continue to develop on an ongoing basis over the next school years, maintaining a weekly record of his/her developing skills, e.g. reading/writing of the code, knowledge of contractions, will help to chart his/her progress. This will also ensure everyone involved in the adaptations of the curriculum are aware of the level of Braille to prepare materials in.
8. Goals will be set, reviewed termly and targeted interventions will be delivered through the child’s weekly Braille programme and SSP.
9. Spelling tests: Child needs to spell the words out and present his/her answers in uncontracted Braille. The Child can then add contracted Braille versions alongside as he/she learns the code.
10. (KS1/2) Braille, like print at this stage, needs to be supported by tactile images or real objects or models. Whenever a picture is used to give meaning to, add interest to, or support print literacy, it should be considered how the Child will be given access to this.
11. It is important for the Child to have the same opportunity for free independent and spontaneous writing as the other children in the class. The Perkins Braille Machine, along with the Child’s writing tools and resources need to be set out in the classroom in a location where they can be accessed independently throughout the school day.
12. Work produced by the Child will need to be transcribed by the VST for marking by the teacher. Alternatively or additionally, the teacher can ask the Child to read back work, to check knowledge and understanding of the topic being taught. This encourages the Child to read their work back. It is also an instant method for the teacher to check the Child understands, without reliance on someone else to translate what he/she has written.
13. Listening skills are important to support the Child to understand the lesson and actions taking place around them, however they should not be relied on as the main way of accessing information, nor should they be a replacement for having information presented in Braille format.
14. The Child will need key words displayed on the interactive board presented in Braille format. This will enable the Child to follow information presented on the interactive board, at the same time, as the other children. (The teacher also needs to say what is being written or pointed to on the board to support the Child’s access.) Provision of the keywords for the Child to read beforehand would further support this access.
15. Adapting the curriculum to ensure it is accessible for the Child takes thought and time. Braille and tactile materials are time consuming to produce. It is also important that the Child’s access is streamlined to ensure that materials are appropriately adapted to enable him/her to reach the learning objective with the minimum of access, whilst ensuring maximum opportunity for success. Facilitating this relies on time being made available for the VST to liaise with the class teacher and with other staff teaching the Child. This needs to be on a regular basis and ahead of the week’s curriculum schedule. This will ensure there is time to collect together the resources required and to enable appropriate Braille and tactile adaptations to be completed.

# Part two: Developing Braille reading and writing skills

1. Ongoing exposure to the initial letter sounds and developing knowledge of the Braille alphabet, both to read and to write it, will support the Child’s access in whole class literacy work, ensuring he/she can take part in phonics work etc. Pupils learning through the medium of Braille will not be able to take part in ‘speedy sounds’ sessions so alternative access should be arranged.
2. Formal teaching of the Braille code needs to run alongside the Child’s participation in the school’s literacy curriculum, which he/she will access according to the level of Braille reading and writing he/she has reached at the current time.
3. The Braille reading scheme “Hands On” will be a main tool used to teach the Child. It will be supplemented by story books written at the level of Braille the child is at, to help consolidate the Braille code at that stage. Read Write Inc will be used in support of phonics as it is produced in braille. Any other phonic scheme used by school will be adapted by the VST.
4. To consolidate the Child’s’ knowledge and enjoyment of reading, books from the school’s reading scheme can be adapted into Braille. These will need to be adapted according to the level of code he/she is currently at and will need to be adapted on an ongoing basis, (rather than ahead of time.)
5. Developing the tactile discrimination skills required to read Braille will be an ongoing and developing skill as the Child continues to refine these and learns those required to interpret tactile diagrams and images, keys and tactile representations. This is something that the Child needs to work on at school through environmental exposure as well as adaptations to class materials.

# Organisation of Braille

1. There needs to be a designated space in the classroom where the Child can keep his/her equipment and space to use a Perkins Braille Machine.
2. The Child needs a space that he/she can access away from the noise and activity of the classroom. Some of the Child’s focussed Braille work will need to be done in this environment as it requires a lot of concentration from the Child.

## Braille in the environment

1. Ensure objects, storage units; folders are labelled with Braille to support the Child’s independent access. Ensure the Child knows the items which have been labelled, their location and how he/she can access them.
2. Classroom displays should include Braille alongside the print labels. Consider the accessibility of this Braille and try to have it within reach so that it can be read.