Advice Sheet C

Whiteboards and interactive whiteboards

Whiteboards and interactive whiteboards (IWBs) are commonly used in schools. How they are used will affect curriculum access for a pupil with vision impairment.

When using a whiteboard it is important to:

- ensure the surface is clean and clear
- avoid any glare falling onto the board itself as this reduces clarity
- use a good quality marker - black or blue ink gives the best contrast to the white background of the board
- speak clearly while you are writing. This is helpful because it allows the pupil with a vision impairment to keep track of what is being presented on the board
- use a 'top to bottom' listing system
- keep information on the board to a minimum
- allow extra time (and, when necessary, give adult support) for copying from the board

Pupils with a significant vision impairment should not be expected to copy from the board as they will not reliably access the information being presented; for example the pupil may have scanning or focusing difficulties. An adult scribe might be used to record the information on a desk whiteboard for the pupil to access with his/her near vision. Alternatively, the class teacher might provide the pupil with a crib sheet of notes/diagrams.

When using an IWB it is important to:

- provide a print out of any presentation used during the lesson. This will enable the pupil to access the information with his / her near vision and follow the lesson alongside his/her fully sighted peers
- verbalise information being drawn or presented on the IWB using specific language
- turn off lighting near the board to maximise contrast and give greater clarity to the information being presented on the screen
- present textual information using a font of an appropriate size and weight. Use an Arial or Century Gothic font as they are made up of straight lines making them sharper and therefore easier to see
- use handwriting recognition for handwriting to be converted to text on the screen which ensures appropriate font style, size and weight can be offered to the pupil with a visual impairment

- ensure that diagrams and charts are emboldened and coloured to give strong contrast. Some colour combinations are known to cause difficulty and should be avoided eg red/green and brown/orange
- position software toolboxes to avoid obstructing the young person's line of vision by reaching across the screen
- position the pupil where he/she is not affected by strong glare from the projector or reflected glare from the IWB
- use the 'zoom' or 'magnifier' options in the IWB software to enlarge and enhance smaller images. 'Zoom' and 'magnifier' facilities can also be found in Microsoft applications
- use 'spotlight' tools to focus the young person's attention on one area of the screen.
- use 'screen shade' tools to hide the contents of the screen which allows the screen to be revealed one segment at a time
- check that the pupil can clearly see the information you are presenting by discretely asking him/her to read back or describe what they can see before the lesson commences
- provide access to 'remote control' software which can allow images presented on the IWB to appear on a young person's laptop. The program *Real VNC*[1] is an example of such software and is available free to download. Alternatively, a pupil might be allowed to access information present on the screen through the laptop connected to the board, or through a separate slave display

[1] https://www.realvnc.com/