



What is a Behavioural Optometrist?

Behavioural Optometrists are specialist optometrists, with interest in how vision affects human performance.

This includes developmental, functional and neuro-optometry.

Behavioural Optometrists will use a range of treatments to help their patients learn and function more efficiently.

This can be applicable for any age group, not just children. It can also be of direct benefit to those with any form of acquired brain injury.

Not all optometrists practice behavioural optometry.



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To find a BABO accredited Behavioural Optometrist visit www.babo.co.uk and go to "Find a Behavioural Optometrist"

Does your child have a learning related vision problem?

FIND OUT MORE WITH OUR CHECKLIST

Vision problems do not "cause" learning disabilities. However, poor visual skills, by interfering with the process, can impede remedial efforts. It is like trying to build a house on sand. Good vision skills, on the other hand, can provide a solid foundation for learning.



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Vision: The brain's way of touching

A large part of learning is done visually. Reading, spelling, writing, whiteboard work, and computer work are among the tasks students tackle all day long, day after day.

Each involves the visual abilities of seeing quickly and understanding visual information, which is frequently less than arm's length from the eyes. Even subtle issues with the visual system can have a major impact on our efficiency and performance, even more so for children where these systems are still developing.

Many students' visual abilities are not up to the level of the demands of these types of classroom learning situations. Clear eyesight is not all that is required.

Youngsters must have a variety of scanning, focusing and visual coordination skills for learning and getting meaning from reading.

If these visual skills have not been or are poorly developed, learning is difficult and more stressful than it needs to be.

Students typically react in one of a variety of ways:

- They avoid near visual work
- They attempt to do the work anyway, but with lowered understanding
- They often experience discomfort, fatigue and short attention span
- They adapt by becoming nearsighted, or by suppressing the vision of one eye

Signs of a visual problem

Visual stress reactions can help explain the discomfort, fatigue, changes in behaviour, altered eyesight and declining school performance that often indicate a learning-related vision problem.

Behavioural optometrists may help their patients deal with visual stress by prescribing "therapeutic lenses". These make it much easier for a child or adult to do close vision work. Another fundamental approach is visual training. This is a sequence of activities prescribed by an optometrist, in which the child builds visual skills and the ability to efficiently take in, understand and use visual information.

Most have 20/20 or 6/6 eyesight but have great difficulty doing vision tasks less than arm's length away. Most eye examinations test just the sharpness of distance eyesight (acuity), so many vision problems that affect learning go undetected. Parents and teachers who understand can identify the signs and symptoms, and spot learning-related visual problems in a child.

Some of these signs are on the following checklist. If a child is continually exhibiting any of these signs, it's time to arrange for a behavioural vision assessment.

- Holding a book very close (only 15-18cms away)
- Child holds head at an extreme angle to the book when reading
- Child covers one eye while reading
- Child squints when doing near work
- Constant poor posture when working close
- Child moves head side to side while reading instead of moving only the eyes
- Poor attention span, drowsiness after prolonged close work
- Homework requiring reading takes longer than it should
- Child occasionally or persistently reports seeing blurring or double while reading or writing
- Child reports blurring or doubling only when work is hard
- Loses place when moving gaze from deskwork to whiteboard, or when copying from text to notebook
- Child must use a marker to keep their place when reading
- Writing up or down hill, irregular letter or word spacing
- Child reverses letters (b for d) or words (saw for was)
- Repeatedly omits "small" words
- Rereads or skips lines unknowingly
- Fails to recognise the same word in the next sentence
- Misaligns numbers
- Headaches after reading or close work
- Burning or itching eyes after doing close vision work
- Child blinks excessively when doing near work, but not otherwise
- Rubs eyes during or after short periods of reading.
- Comprehension drops when reading more
- Child can't describe what they have been reading about