

# Vision Screening Information for School Staff

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is vision screening?

- Vision screening is a series of three short and simple tests used to find out if a child might have eye problems.
- It is non-invasive, so it is not harmful or painful in any way.
- It cannot diagnose a vision disorder, but it may show the need for a full eye examination by an Optometrist to make sure the child has healthy eyes and can see properly.

### Who will be screened?

- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health will provide vision screening for all students in senior kindergarten (SK) at school in accordance with the Ontario Public Health Standards established by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term care.
- Children who already have glasses will be screened wearing their glasses.

### Why is good visual health important?

- Every year in Ontario, 15,000 children have trouble learning to read because they need glasses.
- A child needs healthy eyes and good vision to learn to read and write, see the board, use a computer, participate in sports, and stay safe.

### Why is school-based vision screening important?

- Parents, guardians, and teachers cannot always tell when a child has trouble seeing, and children usually think their own vision is normal.
- If it is not found and corrected early, some eye problems can affect a child's vision for life.
- In Belleville, and the surrounding area, less than 50% of the children between the ages of two and five have had their eyes examined. This means some vision problems are being missed.

### What happens during vision screening?

School vision screening is made up of three short tests to assess the following:

1. The structure of the eyes (using automated equipment)
2. How clear the child's vision is (using a simple letter chart)
3. Depth perception / blending images from both eyes (using a special 3-D picture book)

### What will happen after the vision screening?

The student will receive a letter to bring home outlining the screening results.

- If the child did **not** pass the screening, it is very important to see an optometrist for a full eye exam **as soon as possible**.
- If the child passed the vision screening, a full eye exam is still recommended before the age of five, and they should have regular visits throughout the school years.

### Is consent required?

Yes, informed consent is required in health care; however, "implied", rather than "written" consent is accepted by the Ministry for school screening.

## Information for Teachers (continued)

### How do we get “informed” consent from parents?

We are required to notify parents 10 business days before the vision screening. Therefore, we request each school to send the details in the school newsletter, or through your regular parent communication process, prior to the scheduled screening date. We will provide the newsletter insert electronically. Notification allows parents the opportunity to annually decline screening with a written note.

### How do we get “informed” consent from students?

The screening process is described to the students by a Public Health staff member prior to the screening session. No child is forced to participate.

### What should you do if a student does not want to go to the screening clinic?

- Reinforce to the child that they will not be screened against his/her will.
- Encourage the student to attend the screening clinic and discuss any concerns with Public Health staff.
- Advise staff if child does not want to participate.

### What is provided to those students who are: absent on the scheduled screening date; excluded from the screening by their parent/caregiver; and/or, refuse to participate in the screening?

Every student in senior kindergarten will receive a letter containing educational messages and Public Health contact information, regardless of whether they participated in screening.

### Where should I link parents to information about school screening?

You should direct them to the Vision Screening Program at Public Health for more information, or with any questions they may have:

- Phone: 613-966-5500 ext. 680
- Visit: [hpePublicHealth.ca](http://hpePublicHealth.ca)

### What else do I need to know?

- An eye exam with an Optometrist is free of charge every 12 months, up to the age of 19, with a valid OHIP card.
- Vision screening does not replace a comprehensive eye exam by an Optometrist.

#### **For more information contact Hastings Prince Edward Public Health**

Phone: 613-966-5500 ext. 680 | Toll-free: 1-800-267-2803 ext. 680 | TTY: 711 or 1-800-267-6511

We are committed to providing accessible publications, programs and services to all. For assistance please call 613-966-5500; TTY: 711 or email [accessibility@hpeph.ca](mailto:accessibility@hpeph.ca). For more information, please visit [hpepublichealth.ca](http://hpepublichealth.ca).