

Research Finds Disturbing Lack of Secondary School Resources For Visually Impaired Children

Contributed by DJS Research
Friday, 06 July 2012
Last Updated Friday, 06 July 2012

Education

Research commissioned by the Royal National Institute of the Blind and carried out by LISU has shown a huge lack of resources for visually impaired children in secondary schools.

There are 20,000 children in the UK aged 5-16 who suffer from some form of visual impairment.

LISU sent questionnaires to local authorities' teaching and support staff, questioning the availability of textbooks in schools, the response rate was nearly 60%.

The questionnaire looked at Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) and Key Stage 4 (GCSEs) and covered Maths, Science, English Language and Literature and reference books.

At Key Stage 3, 129 maths text books were identified as being used in schools, of these 2% were available in large or giant text and 14% in braille. Science text book results were no better with no large print textbooks available, 2% of the identified textbooks were available in giant text and 7% available in braille. 143 English language text books were identified as being used for teaching at Key Stage 3. Only 1 of these 143 was available in giant text, 2 were available in braille. For English literature 3% of texts were available in large print and 7 books available in braille. The questionnaire also looked at reference books, a category which included texts such as atlases and dictionaries. Only one of these texts was available to visually impaired children.

At Key Stage 4 the books considered were those recommended by exam boards for pupils sitting their GCSEs. From the selection of set maths books, 1 was available in braille and 2 in large print. Of the more generic maths books looked at 1 was available in large print and 16% in braille. Of 21 set texts for science there were no large or giant print books available and only 1 braille text. 17 English study support texts are identified by various exam boards, 1 of these texts is available in large print. Many of the English Literature set texts are classics making them more readily available than the usual text books, despite this only 16.5% of the editions and texts specified by the exam board could be found in large print. Out of the 17 references books recommended by exam boards none were available in any format.

Overall, 92% of teaching and support staff say they struggle to find necessary textbooks in large print and 85% say they struggle to find braille texts with maths being the hardest to find followed by science, then modern languages and then geography. Comments on the questionnaires included; "it is a nightmare getting hold of books and finding out who has them."

When potential solutions were offered 89% of respondents thought electronic versions of texts would be helpful and 82% thought a central agency who could supply texts for the visually impaired was a good idea.

92% of respondents felt that delays and unavailability of textbooks had an effect on both the social development and educational progress of visually impaired children. Comments on this included; "Having accessible materials benefits self-esteem, social inclusion and independence" and "This would be a fantastic thing for RNIB to champion. It would make a huge difference to the lives and learning potential of all visually impaired pupils."

About The Authors

About DJS Research
For more information please visit www.djsresearch.co.uk

5 July 2012