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Transitions Optical Brings Eye Health To Life Through Schools Programme And Innovative Website Targeting 7-11 Year Olds

Transitions Optical, the leading global provider of photochromic lenses for spectacles, launches a schools programme called 'Eye Know Eye Care' targeting 150,000 Key Stage 2 primary school kids and their parents from this September in conjunction with the National Schools Partnership, the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) and the Association of Optometrists (AOP).

Recent alarming research* shows one in twenty 'Year 2' children (6-7 year olds) have an uncorrected problem with their sight and by the time children reach 'Year 8' (12-13 year olds) this figure rises to one in 10, however, currently schools do not have a nationwide scheme to assess the vision of school age children. Undetected problems can seriously damage a child's eye health, affect the child's social and academic development, and lead to permanent visual problems in later life.

Transitions Optical has therefore come up with an innovative and creative initiative to make it possible for teachers and eyecare professionals to try and address this problem by bringing eye health into the heart of the KS2 curriculum.

Transitions Optical has been working with the National Schools Partnership to put together resources such as lesson plans, activity sheets and a competition leaflet (which goes home to the parents), which will bring eye health into a variety of cross curricular lessons, for example:

- PSHE and Literacy - writing a diary from the point of view of a blind person
- PE, Maths, PSHE - understanding the importance of sight for accuracy in sport
- PSHE, Literacy - protecting our eyesight from UV and design a poster warning of the dangers of UV
- Science, Art & PSHE - understanding colour and colour blindness
- Science, Design & Technology - designing a pair of glasses
- Science - what is glare and how can it affect my eyes
- PSHE, Literacy - write an article to encourage people to have their eyes tested
- Art homework – a competition to design a pair of 'Spectacular Spectacles'!** Transitions Optical has teamed up with children's frame manufacturer Zoobug, so the winner will get the chance to have their design made up for them into a pair of real glasses by Zoobug.

Roland Allen, Business Director for Northern Europe, Transitions Optical, comments, "We are very excited about our Eye Know Eye Care schools programme, which spreads the word about the importance of healthy sight to school age children and their parents. Our research*** shows that only 38% of children go to the optometrist once every 2 years, when 92% would have visited the dentist over the same time period. By educating a younger generation we hope to reverse this trend.

It is now up to teachers and parents to embrace this programme to ensure the message of healthy sight is spread to children nationwide."

In addition, Transitions Optical has been instrumental in getting industry representatives from the Association of British Dispensing Opticians, ABDO, and The Association of Optometrists, AOP, together to support this initiative. By creating a holistic programme getting DOs and Optometrists into schools to present at school assemblies and 'de-mystify the eye test and vision problems', the campaign aims to encourage children to speak up about any vision problems they may be experiencing and to visit their local optician on a regular basis.

Roland Allen adds, "We have had a considerable amount of interest in this programme from eyecare professionals. Parents should look out for the Eye Know Eye Care window stickers in their local optician to know which practitioners are participating in the school visits."

This campaign aims to go one step towards changing the habits of parents towards eye examinations and with eye tests currently free for children less than 16 years old, there is no excuse for them not to go for regular eye tests! Parents should also be aware that there are a myriad of different lens options available, one being photochromic lenses which particularly suit children who are constantly in and out of doors and exposed to harmful UV light.

One of the main resources for the campaign, developed by Transitions Optical is a fun new dedicated website – www.eyeknoweyecare.com aimed at 7-11 year olds which includes eye facts, the eye's anatomy, the dangers of UV exposure on the eyes and information on visual impairments. It also includes fun eye exercises, such as optical illusions and memory games, and explains what happens during an eye examination for both kids and parents. Much of the information will be incorporated into the schools programme lesson plans as interactive downloadable content.

When asked, more than a quarter (28%) of parents said they were relieved to find out that their child required spectacles, as it helped them understand the root of their child's problems. Parents should look out for some tell tale signs of vision problems, eg. sitting too close to the TV, losing their place frequently when reading, rubbing their eyes excessively and experiencing headaches, as well as difficulty with ball games. Should any of these signs be apparent, parents should seek immediate help from their local optometrist.

Teachers interested in receiving an Eye Know Eye Care pack for their school should register on www.eyeknoweyecare.com and click on 'for teachers' or ring 020 7198 8340.

For further information, please visit:
www.eyeknoweyecare.com or www.transitions.com

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Editor's Notes:

* Research by Aston University, 2007 commissioned by ABDO, AOP and FODO.

**The 'Spectacular Spectacles' competition is open to all KS2 children via their schools or they can enter directly on www.eyeknoweyecare.com. The winning prize includes a trip to London with their family to visit the Zoobug designers, a trip on the London Eye and a visit to the Science Museum. The winner's school also gets a £500 prize towards school resources. 2 runners' up also get a Nintendo DS each.

Competition is open from September – 30th November 2009 and all entries to be sent to the National Schools Partnership.

*** IPSOS report on Healthy Sight commissioned by Transitions Optical, April 2009.

The National Schools Partnership supports companies, government departments and charities to develop and deliver effective school partnership programmes and projects. Established in 2004, its work focuses on understanding the real objectives for any activity in this area, whether commercial or social, and then working with the client to ensure those aims are met.

Quotes:

Mark Fawcett, Managing Director, National Schools Partnership, says, "We are delighted to be working with Transitions Optical on this programme. Children are well taught about the health of teeth and other parts of their body but there are very few good resources for teachers to talk about vision and eye health. The teachers' plans and activity sheets cover a variety of subjects and there are several interactive downloads available to bring the subject of eye health to life. The eyeknoweyecare.com website is a fantastic resource for both teachers and parents alike. Schools are very keen for effective supportive resource and for professionals to come into schools, so, the way that Transitions has approached this campaign in such a holistic manner is great and we look forward to a very successful campaign."

Karen Sparrow, Association of Optometrists, says, "Many school children are being put at a disadvantage because undetected vision problems mean that they are being labelled as under-performing or with low attention spans. It's important for vision problems such as amblyopia (lazy eye) to be picked up while children are young, both for their personal development and to prevent lasting damage. It is really worrying that there is not currently a universally accessible nationwide scheme to assess the vision of school aged children. Transitions Optical is promoting better understanding and awareness with the Eye Know Eye Care Schools Programme. The AOP is delighted to be involved with such a creative and important initiative."

Bob Hughes, Chief Executive, AOP, says, "Undetected poor eyesight in young children can blight their education, and even the rest of their lives, yet there is no rigorous or reliable government programme to ensure that sight problems are picked up and corrected. The AOP is delighted to work with Transitions Optical to tackle the problem head on. Many young people and their families stand to gain enormously from this initiative, and we urge the profession to give it their support."

Further research* statistics:

- 55% of parents feel that spectacles look good on their kids
- Myopia is the most common vision problem amongst children
- In a child under 10 years of age, the lens in the eye allows more than 6 times the amount of UV radiation to penetrate than in an adult's eye
- 61% of children prefer Transitions lenses over clear lenses for outdoor activities, for reasons such as darkening in sunlight, better vision and less squinting in sunlight.
- 88% of parents also rated their children's experience of Transitions lenses to be favourable or very favourable.

Issued on behalf of:
Issued by:
Contact:

Transitions Optical
DSA PR
Sosannah Every / Sana Van Dal
T: 020 7553 3700
E: sosannah@dsapr.co.uk OR sana@dsapr.co.uk