



Optometrists and Speech Pathologists Working Together to Improve Reading Skills

Reading is a complex task involving many skills which need to be working together efficiently. It is only when this happens that a child is able to read effortlessly and accurately.

Research has found that there are certain foundational skills that all children need to have acquired before their reading is going to 'take-off'. These skills need to be developed and practised until they become automatic.

The foundational skills I am referring to are:

1. Visual perception (how your brain interprets what it sees)
2. Phonological awareness (the ability to think about a word separate from its meaning).

Before your child's visual perceptual and phonological awareness skill are assessed it is wise to visit a Behavioural Optometrist and Audiologist to have your child's visual acuity and hearing checked. In many cases, poor readers require glasses to assist their vision...but the child struggling to read often needs more than this to fully address their reading difficulties.

After they have seen the Behavioural Optometrist and Audiologist, it is recommended that they be assessed by a Speech Pathologist and an Occupational Therapist, who have a special interest in reading difficulties.

The Occupational Therapist can assess your child's visual perceptual and handwriting skills. The Speech Pathologist will assess your child's phonological awareness skills, including the child's ability to break words into syllables and sounds and to read and spell nonsense words.

Visual Perceptual skills and Phonological Awareness skills are the basic building blocks required for reading success. If assessment finds weaknesses in these areas then it is critical that they be worked on by a professional who specializes in these difficulties. It is only when these skills are strong and automatic that a child's reading will start to improve.

Some Speech Pathologists work in specialist reading clinics and will also assess your child's reading. By looking at the information from the:

- Behavioural Optometrist
- Audiologist
- Occupational Therapist,

they can diagnose why your child is having trouble reading and be able to advise you as to the best way to help your child improve his reading.

If you would like to talk to someone about your child's reading difficulties; call Tyquin Group Reading Clinic on 3399 8028.