

“Use of whiteboards a strain on pupils’ eyes” (Woo Shali, ST Forum, 18/7, pH6)

MYOPIA in primary-school children now is worse than in the 1960s -70s when I was in primary school.

My eldest daughter's eyesight gets worse with each year in school. Despite my advocating good reading habits and her having eye-relaxation exercises in class, her complaints about not being able to see properly arose mainly from the classroom.

The following are some problems, and possible solutions, in classroom design that the authorities could look into to prevent children's eyesight from deteriorating further.

I was always the tallest girl in primary school and the teacher made me sit at the back of the class. I noticed that the shorter girls did not wear glasses as they were always seated in front and had a better view of the blackboard.

I believe teachers still make taller children sit at the back so as not to block the view of shorter ones.

A solution would be to have the tables and chairs raised towards the back of the classroom, like in a cinema, so that no one gets blocked. Any problem with taller children sitting in front? Teachers will have to write above a minimum level on the board so that everyone can see.

My daughter cannot read what the teacher writes on the whiteboard, especially when she sits at the back, and has to strain her eyes, even with glasses. The words are too small and the whiteboard marker, faded.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) should stipulate a minimum height for teachers' handwriting. This could be in the form of a guide affixed to one side of the board.

Also, markers should be refilled before they start to run dry. The width of the pen tip is also critical for better vision. So is the colour; red markers are not as clear as black ones.

Vision is poor when a student sits at the side of the classroom, nearer the front, then in the middle, farther away. To overcome this problem, a study should be made of angle of vision in relation to size of whiteboard. Whiteboards should not be too long. They can be made to curve slightly inwards.

Reflection on the whiteboard from the early-morning and late-afternoon sun and reflection from the lights above are a problem.

Curtains could be drawn or window panes near the whiteboard designed with either solid material or opaque glass. In designing schools, the window side of classrooms should be made to face north or south. The lights above the board should be different from the general lighting in the classroom.

Whiteboards are more reflective than blackboards. They are therefore more glaring to the eyes. Would a 'blueboard' or 'greyboard' be less reflective and easier on the eye?

My youngest daughter will be going to Primary One next year. I hope MOE will look into the above problems that parents like me noticed when their children complain about not seeing clearly in class.

Good vision is vital to students and efforts to assist them to have better vision would be greatly appreciated.