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Transitions Optical Launches Innovative Schools Programme To Promote Eye Health To 7-11 Year Olds

Transitions Optical launches 'Eye Know Eye Care' a schools programme targeting 150,000 Key Stage 2 primary school kids and their parents from this September in conjunction with ABDO and AOP.

Recent alarming 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. Currently schools do not have a nationwide scheme to assess the vision of school age children and therefore the message about the importance of healthy sight is not reaching kids or their parents. 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, competition leaflets (which go home to the parents), which will bring eye health into a variety of lessons, for example:

- Science – lessons on shadows, teaching about the sun and how it affects the eyes, effects of glare and quality of vision;
- English – writing a newspaper article about the importance of having regular eye examinations;
- Maths – study of statistics and percentages using eye related data;
- Art – 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 brings together eye care professionals and teachers. This is a considerable investment for Transitions and is a key element of our strategy to promote healthy sight to school age children and their parents.

"The campaign goes one step towards changing the habits of parents towards eye examinations and encourages them to take their children into opticians on a regular basis. It will also 'open their eyes' to the possibility of the different lens options available and the fact that upgrades from standard lenses are possible. Research** indicates that 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. Eighty eight percent of parents also rated their children's experience of Transitions lenses to be favourable or very favourable," he adds.

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."

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 and create a holistic programme by getting DOs and Optometrists into schools to present at school assemblies and 'de-mystify the eye test and vision problems' and encourage children to visit their local optician on a regular basis. This is an opportunity not to be missed by practitioners, not only to advertise their services and their particular practises but also to reach kids of all primary school ages from 4 – 11 years old.

Transitions Optical will provide all practitioners who have registered interest in the campaign, with a complete presentation pack to make it as easy as possible for them to present in schools. This will include, for example, points about what to say, eye-catching display posters, list of things to bring along, as well as encouraging practitioners to leave vouchers with their contact details, which will get passed on to pupils' parents.

Barry Duncan, President, ABDO, says, "This initiative from Transitions Optical is a great chance for dispensing opticians to be in the driving seat promoting the correction of children's vision in practice. This is especially interesting for us as children's vision is one of the unique areas where we have the chance to highlight and demonstrate our skills to the public since it is important that children be seen by a registered professional."

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."

DOs and Optometrists who are interested in registering to receive display materials and presentation information, as well as finding out which schools in their area have opted into the Transitions Optical schools programme, should contact the ABDO membership department by phone on:

01227 733922 / 912/ 902 or email membership@abdo.org.uk or register online on www.abdo.org.uk and go to the online survey section.

Roland Allen, adds, "From an initial email letter sent to ABDO members, we are delighted to see that within the first 24 hours, we already have 100 DOs signed up to our scheme! We really hope that the momentum for this initiative continues and more ABDO and AOP members will sign up to present in schools. Transitions Optical has key account managers able to visit stores to help practitioners fully understand the benefits of Transitions lenses for children and to view the product as a trans-generational one. From September we are also making available a window sticker to registered members to further enhance the visibility of this campaign to kids, parents and teachers alike."

To round off this campaign, Transitions Optical will be launching a dedicated website – www.eyeknoweyecare.com at the end of July, which will continue to promote healthy sight in a fun and interactive way. Much of the information will be incorporated into the schools programme lesson plans as interactive downloadable content, which teachers can also download from the site.

-ENDS-

Editor's Notes:

The Nationals 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.

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

** Research by Clinical and Experimental Optometry, 2006

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