

## Learning through touch in Malawi

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Blind and visually impaired children in Malawi are being helped to access mainstream education by Birmingham researchers.

Working with the charity Sightsavers International, Dr Paul Lynch and Dr Steve McCall from the Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research (VICTAR) have recommended teaching approaches and learning materials that can best secure blind children's development in local schools.

Steve says: 'Teaching a child who is blind in a local village school where the staff do not read Braille is clearly a very difficult thing to get right. Our research has established what needs to be in place to allow blind children to be successful in this environment.'

Paul and Steve worked with a group of seven children, their class teachers and parents, and talked to the government about resource issues before making a report to Malawi's Ministry of Education earlier this year. They are now producing a handbook for class teachers in mainstream schools.

'The work we do is very rewarding because we're solving practical problems and needs. I take tremendous satisfaction from trying to improve these children's life choices and local schools are often the only possible chance for them to have any kind of an education,' Steve says.

Birmingham's School of Education is the main training provider for teachers of visually impaired children and adults in the UK and its link with Sightsavers International goes back to the 1960s.

**[Watch a video of Paul and Steve's research in action \(http://www.isambard-dm.com/demos/SS/SS.html\)](http://www.isambard-dm.com/demos/SS/SS.html)**