What is accommodative stabismus?
This is a squint associated with long sightedness or hypermetropia. In “long sight”, the eyes have to use extra focusing power in order to see clearly. Normally, this focusing power (known as accommodation) is used only to focus on things close up, like reading. For these close up tasks, the eyes naturally turn inwards (converge). Convergence is linked to the focusing effort in the eyes. A “long-sighted” child must use extra focusing effort to see clearly in the distance, and even more for close up. This results in over-convergence of the eyes and can cause a child’s eye to turn in (squint), either all the time or only at certain times (particularly when tired or ill). Although your child may be managing to keep their eyes straight this is only because they are straining the eyes. Spectacles take away the need for the eyes to “over focus”, helping them see more clearly and helping prevent the turning eye caused by their hypermetropia.

What is astigmatism?
It is usually the result of a slight distortion of the cornea (the window or clear part over the front of the eye). Ideally, the cornea should be shaped like the side of a football. In astigmatism the cornea is shaped a little more like the side of a rugby ball, steeper in one direction and a flatter in the other. The result of this distortion is that your child will not be seeing as clearly as they should in the distance and close up. Spectacles have been prescribed to correct this blurry vision and to make sure that the vision in the eyes develops normally.

What is anisometropia?
A difference in the spectacle prescription between the right and the left eyes is known as anisometropia. This means that only one eye at any time is in focus and the picture formed in the other eye is blurred. With both eyes open, your child can probably see perfectly clearly. This is because they are only using the information from the one, clearly focussed eye. The blurry image formed by their other eye is being ignored. Spectacles have been prescribed to put the two eyes into balance. This is essential during the first five years of life and continues to be of importance up to eight years of age, while the eyes are still developing.

Are spectacles absolutely necessary?
Without the spectacle correction there is a strong risk that the eye or eyes will become “amblyopic” or “lazy”. This is where the brain never learns to understand anything more than the fuzzy image that the eyes have picked up during the early years of life. In amblyopia, the vision is not sharp, even with the best possible spectacles. The eyes and the part of the brain that process vision are still developing up to the age of eight years and it is important that clear images are focussed in the eyes during this time to prevent or reverse amblyopia. The treatment for one “lazy eye” is to patch the better eye for periods of time.
How do I get these spectacles?
The optometrist will give you a copy of the prescription for spectacle lenses and a voucher towards the cost of the spectacles. The voucher should cover the cost of standard plastic lenses although you may find that there is a charge for the frame in which the lenses will be fitted. Price and ranges vary from one optician to the next. The hospital has a spectacle service based at Wycombe General Hospital with a range of children's frames. Only qualified dispensing opticians, optometrists or ophthalmic medical practitioners (doctors with extra qualifications in prescribing and fitting spectacles) are allowed to dispense spectacles to children and you should make sure that whoever deals with your child is a registered practitioner.

When should the spectacles be worn?
It is important that your child wears the spectacles as much as possible, preferably all the time. The plastic lenses which are fitted into children’s spectacles are safe and light. Unless you are advised otherwise, the glasses should be worn for nearly all activities (swimming and active contact sports being the exceptions).

If you have other children, it is advisable to have their eyes tested.

If you have any queries, please contact the Orthoptic Department on 01494 425480 or the Optometry Department on 01494 425871.

Optometry Department
Wycombe and Amersham Hospitals 01494 425871