

Villa Vision Impact Evaluation

The Impact of the Villa Vision Programme

Final Report October 2022 – Executive Summary



Villa Vision partners



ASTON VILLA
FOUNDATION



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Evaluation partners:



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Background

Villa Vision led by Aston Villa Foundation in collaboration with Aston University with funding from the University, Premier League, Professional Footballers Association and Essilor Lux's charitable foundation OneSight.

Villa Vision was designed to increase access to eye health education, eye screening, eye examinations, and to prescribe glasses to those who need them among school children that live within close proximity of Villa Park.

This evaluation was funded by Wesleyan Foundation and Aston University's Internal Policy Fund. It ran from January to September 2022. More than 40 schools have received the full Villa Vision programme, accessing over 3,400 children in more than 15 priority areas in Birmingham.

Villa Vision meets 8 of the Premier League's community fund objectives, which focus on improving physical and mental wellbeing, developing knowledge, confidence, improving interpersonal relationships, and progression.

Evaluation Objectives and Findings

This Impact Evaluation was designed to demonstrate the impact Villa Vision has had on schools, children, and their parents. The objectives are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Research Objectives of Impact Evaluation

To map the provision of optometry services within the Villa Vision target communities	To describe children's experiences of the Villa Vision programme and their understanding of eye health
To collate the screening and eye examination results among children tested	To examine parents' knowledge of Villa Vision and their understanding of eye health
To test children's reading efficiency in Villa Vision schools and compare against control data	To assess teachers' understanding of Villa Vision and their knowledge of eye health in the classroom

Villa Vision Data Analyses

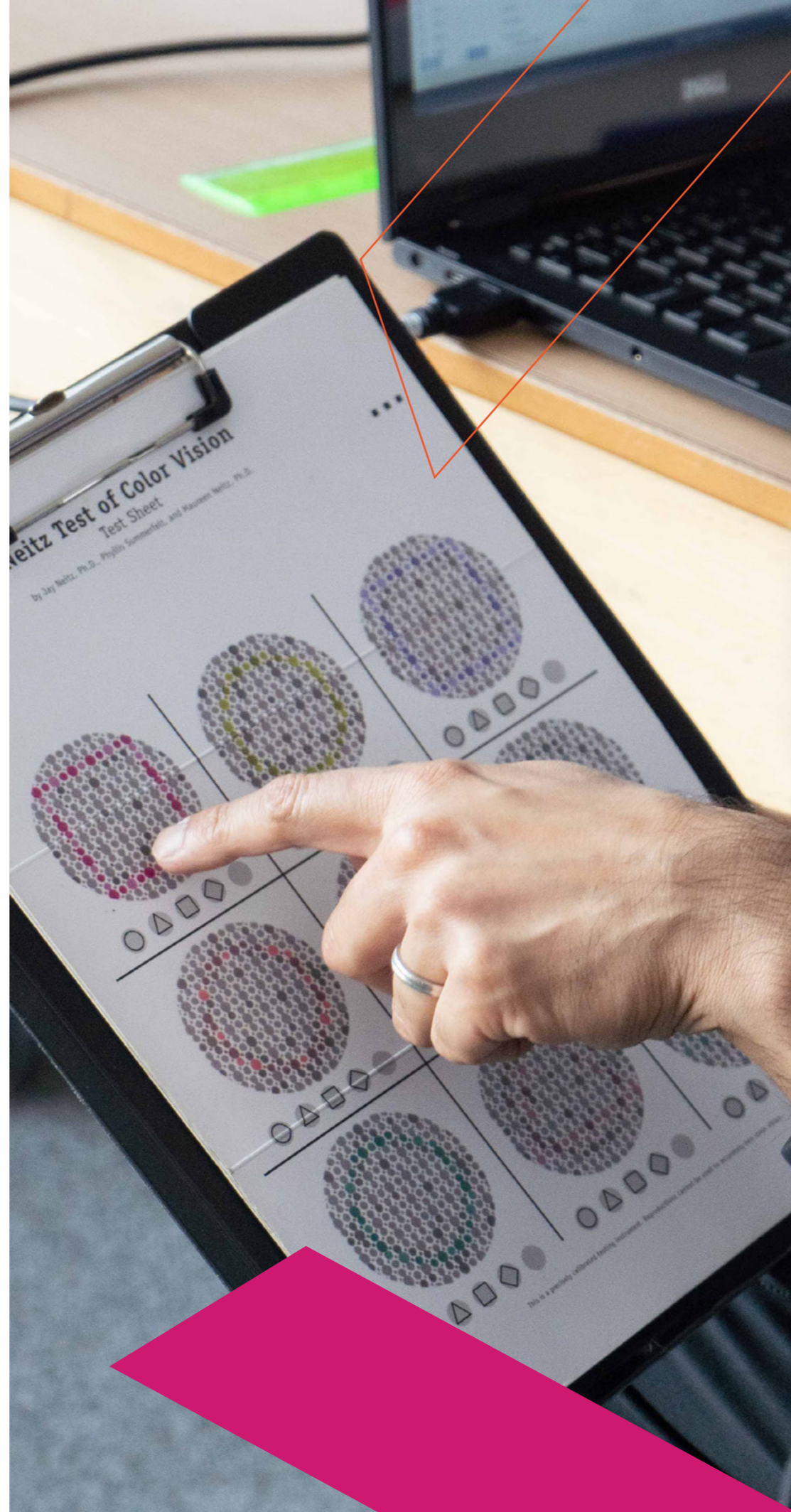
Mapping the geographical location of optometry practices within the areas of each Villa Vision participating school showed good provision. Further analysis would help identify if access using public transport or on foot is feasible for families in those areas.

Over 2,900 children received vision and colour vision screening checks, nearly 150 received fully comprehensive eye examinations, and approx. 200 pairs of glasses were prescribed (2 pairs per child). In total 3% of children failed the colour vision screening; 5% were referred to full eye examinations within the Villa Vision programme.

Of children screened, 33% self-reported as glasses wearers. The majority (51%) of those who had visited an optometrist had done so in the last 2 years; 25% reported not having been to an optometrist at all.

We assessed children's reading efficiency in three Villa Vision schools and compared it against data from similar schools. Children in Villa Vision schools were much more likely to speak English as an Additional Language, be eligible for free school meals, and be in receipt of Special Educational Needs support in comparison to the national averages.

Given the above, we would expect performance on reading efficiency to be poorer in Villa Vision schools than in the comparison schools we identified from the Aston Literacy Project (which were as closely matched as possible). However, we found that Villa Vision schools and our comparison schools outperformed the national average, but Villa Vision children were even further ahead than those in the comparison schools.



Experiences of Villa Vision

We interviewed 34 parents about their knowledge of Villa Vision, their child's experiences, and their general eye health knowledge. They expressed gratitude to Villa Vision for providing eye examinations, because they experienced barriers in getting access to optometrists themselves.

They were concerned about their child's screentime and its effect on their sight. They acknowledged issues with 'policing' screentime due to their own behaviours with their handheld devices.

Parents' eye health knowledge was generally good, although their confidence levels were low.

Parents reported problems with communication between them and their child, the school, and Villa Vision. Some were concerned about their child wearing glasses, but others found it had increased their child's confidence.

Two teachers from one school were able to provide comments on Villa Vision. They were impressed with its content, level, and the interactive and creative way in which the Villa Vision workshops were delivered. They would like further information on signs of poor vision to help children and their parents identify a possible need for glasses.

The teachers also reported that the sight tests and provision of glasses where they were needed had improved children's engagement in class and had helped them manage their anxieties, especially in maths, a subject found to be challenging in its own right, without sight difficulties adding to children's problems. Wearing glasses positively impacted on children's reading, concentration and social engagement.

Children were asked to engage with a number of activities related to their thoughts about Villa Vision, the eye tests, and their eye health knowledge more generally. They enjoyed the workshop, especially the interactive components and the virtual reality task. Children were aware of potential stigma around glasses wearing, but if their family members wore glasses it was normalized and didn't pose a problem for them.

What we have learned from Villa Vision

- **The Villa Vision Van took a large burden away from busy parents.** Historically they had struggled to find the time to access optometry services with their children and felt they were neglecting their child's health as a consequence.
- **The timing of Villa Vision was particularly beneficial** for some parents as we were just coming out of the lockdowns and all the additional pressures that that had put on parents.
- **Parents were knowledgeable about eye health** but lacked confidence in their knowledge.
- **Parents were keen to do the right thing for their child's eye health.** They were not always sure what that was though and expressed a desire to receive a Villa Vision workshop similar to that their children had received.
- **Teachers were concerned about children's sight and aware of its potentially damaging consequences on a child's educational and social futures.** They would like some tips on how to detect and triage potential sight problems.
- **Teachers were very impressed with Villa Vision** – the Villa Vision Van, the workshops, and the engagement with the children.
- **Children were fascinated by the Villa Vision workshop.** They enjoyed its engaging and interactive delivery and loved the virtual reality activity in particular.
- **Children had mature views about the potential stigma associated with glasses wearing.** This was different depending on children's own experiences at home and with friends.

Recommendations

- **Accessibility to Villa Vision information needs to be improved for parents.** Many were not fluent/literate in English so required translations of written material. A suggestion is QR codes on communications taking parents to links where translated material can be found. Some parents expressed a desire for more concise information. One suggestion is to create short podcasts/YouTube videos; that parents can play on their phone with key information. Subtitles could be used on videos to access parents who are not fluent in English.
- **Parents would like a Villa Vision workshop for themselves.** There was a keen desire to increase their eye health knowledge so that they could help their children and support them in appropriate ways.
- **Parents would like guidance on how to manage screentime for their children;** what kinds of restrictions should they put in place, what is the level of risk. They also might welcome some tips on how to manage their own screentime so as to be good role models for their children.
- **Easier access to optometry services was desired.** This was largely due to being busy, and potentially not knowing where local optometry services are in some cases. Bringing the clinic to the schools in the **Villa Vision Van** solved access problems. Their recommendation was for the Villa Vision programme to continue.
- **The screening and full eye exams** clearly identified children with uncorrected vision who otherwise would not have received glasses.
- **Teachers expressed a desire for further information,** possibly a workshop, which would help them identify possible indicators of poor vision so they could advocate for children in their class when required.
- **Children expressed a desire for glasses wearing to be normalized.** One way to achieve this is to include children wearing glasses in teaching materials. Children wearing glasses could be represented better in children's

literature and media content too. Children were aware of the image conscious nature of much of their (online) interaction with peers and felt a need to make glasses more acceptable.

- **Eye health needs to be on the curriculum.** Children clearly benefited from the workshop and learned new things about their eye health which might inform their future behaviours.
- Conducting **reading efficiency tests** highlighted better than anticipated performance among children in priority areas. This in itself is a recommendation that other similar schools do the same. Indeed, conducting this (quick and easy) test routinely with children in years 5-6 would provide schools with invaluable data about their children's reading ability.

Concluding remarks

The project has had a wider uptake than originally envisaged. There have been clear benefits to the Villa Vision project in terms of how the children, parents and teachers have engaged with it and their experiences of it.

The results of the reading efficiency tests show us that children in Villa Vision participating schools are doing better than would otherwise be expected, based on comparable schools and national averages.

There is learning about the level of confidence parents and children have in their knowledge of eye health and a desire to improve that knowledge. Teachers too would like to be better equipped to detect and triage sight problems.

Communication and accessibility are central to the success of a project like this. There are some improvements that can be made in this direction in the future implementation of Villa Vision. The findings of this Impact Evaluation show that it is worth making an investment to increase accessibility of information about Villa Vision in order to further spread its reach across the areas of Birmingham where real improvements could be made in children's prospects.

Thank you so much to Wesleyan and Aston University for funding the opportunity for the programme to be evaluated.

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