



For those with visual impairments, the use of keyboard stickers can give more clarity by providing greater contrast between the background and the letter and they are a cheap way to make a laptop keyboard more accessible. Alternative on-screen keyboards can be bought for the iPad within the App Store. These can also provide a good visual contrast to help partially sighted users to find the right keys.



EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH INTO THE USE OF AT

- The Dyslexia Apps Project – <https://bit.ly/2TnC7m8>
- MirandaNet provides a link between supplier, schools & higher education and universities – <https://bit.ly/2CMSUhw>

ACCESSED THROUGH nasen MEMBERSHIP:

- Journal of Research in Special Education (JORSEN) 'An exploration of teacher's use of iPads for students with learning support needs' – <https://bit.ly/2TmSBLe>
- JORSEN 'Technology for people, not disabilities: ensuring access and inclusion' – <https://bit.ly/2F56o6i>

For those with cognitive and communication needs, software can be used to scaffold the writing experience, e.g. Clicker 7. This shapes the language into a grammar form through a combination of colour, grids and text-to-speech. Pupils with Down's Syndrome and those with Aphasia may find this helpful, as well as those with more general cognition and learning needs.

For those who need support with organisational skills, mind maps help pupils to see details in relation to the bigger picture by creating a visual representation of relationships between ideas. Coloured folders, and even just folders on a cloud-based resource such as Evernote, could strengthen skills and make work accessible from any computer. Windows 10 has great 'tagging' features which help you to find files you have been working on by using the search window or the tiled window option.

SO WHERE DO SCHOOLS GO FOR INFORMATION ABOUT ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?

Schools are currently faced with ever-tightening budgets which means that funding new IT equipment, software and networks is a challenge. This is a real problem considering how quickly technology develops. This is coupled with the fact that LA ICT advisory services, for the large part, no longer exist.

The British Assistive Technology Association (BATA) is seeking to help schools understand the benefits of AT and has an AT Educationalist group, which is open to anyone, to facilitate discussion and information-sharing. You can join by emailing the group – www.bataonline.org.uk/contact. If you want to raise an AT-related issue, you can do so through our BATA forum page www.bataonline.org.uk/bata-forums

We need a fresh look at what ICT can do in 2019 to help pupils with special needs, as well as needing to ensure that teachers are equipped to take full advantage of the tools on offer.



MYLES PILLING

Myles draws from a long career as both an ICT Co-ordinator in a special school and an LA Adviser for ICT SEN operating a loan bank of equipment for pupils with special needs. Myles is also a Director of the British Assistive Technology Association and an Associate of the Higher Education Authority, as well as being a researcher into the use of ICT in education.

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