



Assistive and mainstream technology providing access to the curriculum for a severely disabled student in a secondary school

The context for the use of ICT for Inclusion

C is an intelligent year-11 student who attends a mainstream secondary school (Tor Bridge High) in Plymouth, Devon. He hopes to go to university to take a degree in business studies. C has a very severe form of athetoid cerebral palsy, which affects all four limbs and his speech. C is totally dependent on ICT in order to access the curriculum. Four years ago, C mostly made use of a scribe for recording his work; this was very tiring as his speech is so poor. C was unhappy with this situation and together we looked for alternatives. C purchased an iPad and then things began to change. He proved that he was able to use it and the school was willing to work with him and also purchased an iPad for school use. The key partners involved are C, his mother, the school and myself.

The policy context

This involves a willingness within the school to provide the equipment and software required, as well as to make changes to working practice, e.g. by emailing worksheets and PowerPoints for C to use on the iPad. Support from ICT technicians is also available to ensure that the iPad fits into the school's ICT system.

The use of ICT

C uses a combination of the iPad, desktop computers and his own iMac at home. He still needs a scribe for exams and some subjects, such as maths. It works – in so many schools, barriers are put in the way of such developments. All teachers are aware of C's ICT needs and go out of their way to help him. As a member of ICT support staff, I visit C at school and we look at new apps and software that may be of use.

Key outcomes and benefits

C has become far more independent in his work. He is expected to achieve B and C grades in his General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams. Unfortunately, this reflects his difficulties rather than his overall ability. C will continue to receive support throughout the 6th form and new ways of overcoming barriers to learning will be examined. I am sure C will achieve his dream of a university place.

Main challenges and obstacles

The obstacles to using ICT are mostly fatigue on C's part. Physically, C finds it difficult to use ICT as cerebral palsy affects all of his body. He finds the iPad much easier to access than any other system. Initially there were problems linking the iPad to the school system, but these have mostly been overcome now. The staff members are wonderful and are very receptive to training – they are willing to go and try things out in their own time. C should be an advocate for Apple – it is his determination and interest in ICT that has led the very positive developments. C will always be at the forefront of technological progress and, therefore, will keep up with it. The school totally supports C and is committed to providing the resources required to enable him to be as independent as possible.

Additional information

Tor Bridge High, Plymouth

CP (Student)

SP (Mother)

Sue Carlyon (Outreach Advisory Teacher – Physical Disabilities/ICT)