



I started at Moon Hall School Reigate in September and I am Assistive Technologies Lead and Head of Careers. Very few schools have a subject lead for assistive technology but at this school it is essential.

Moon Hall is a specialist school for dyslexic pupils and the emphasis is firmly on helping them to showcase and develop their creativity, ingenuity and entrepreneurial skills. To do this we need to remove the barriers to reading, writing, spelling and organisation that often accompany this neurodiverse condition.

This is where assistive technology comes into its own. We encourage our pupils to use keyboard shortcuts, screen readers, voice recognition and Immersive Reader.

Once they leave school, our learners will be going on to university, apprenticeships, and employment and these are the tools they will be using in their day to day life, far more frequently than handwriting. It makes sense to develop their skills as early as possible.

Lockdown last year showed us that technology can offer greater support opportunities to our pupils. Lessons were on Microsoft Teams and with easy access to PowerPoints on their machine at home they could revisit content and teachers saw an increase in independence.

Michelle Catterson, our Executive Headteacher, is keen that children have the best start for their adult life. The majority of our learners have an EHCP and come from state schools in Sussex and Surrey. In 2021 for the second year in a row, Moon Hall School pupils enjoyed amazing GCSE results, with many exceeding their predicted grades.

One of the key skills we want to teach is touch typing. There are many programs around but we wanted one which was cost effective – some are very expensive - and which was a serious teaching aid and not a game with pop ups, adverts and other distractions.

One of our teaching assistants recommended KAZ which she had used with great success with her son. It has a special dyslexia friendly version which lets pupils set their own profile for colours and screen brightness. The program stores these so when they log in, they don't waste time fiddling with settings each time. Our years 5 and 6 have an hour a week on touch typing. At this age they are really receptive. They are keen to practise their skills so they become the 'normal way of working' which is so important when it comes to exams. Some of the older learners



David Curran
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in years 10 and 11 seem to be more set in their ways and like to have a scribe but we are gradually giving them the skills and confidence to use technology in exams.

Touch typing lets children exploit their kinaesthetic skills and they learn patterns on the keyboard for the most commonly used words. This might sound like a minor advantage but it is liberating.

I started out as a design and technology teacher and I used to notice that in their written work many young people would use the same words all the time. Their vocabulary was limited by the words they could spell. Touch typing expands their active vocabulary and as their confidence builds, they become more creative and communicate more effectively and this is reflected in better exam grades.

KAZ also lets pupils and staff add their own words and we are working with speech and language to add these in too. As pupils all have their own technology this will give them extra practice.

KAZ also offers the opportunity for pupils to get a qualification and this is an extra incentive. With the best will in the world, young people are under such pressure now and they are all going to ask, 'What's in it for me?' With KAZ, they can see what they're getting.



Michelle Catterson - Executive Headteacher