

Technology is so important for our special students. Also, as teachers without technology, I'm not quite sure where we would be. Our students use technology for communication, for access. We use switches, we use joysticks, we use large keyboards. And there's so much software that we need to access with our students. So we use specialist software so they can use cause and effect.

Some of our learners cannot verbally communicate. Vocally? Yes.

Eye contact? Yes.

Small movements? Yes.

And to get them to allow them to communicate, to allow them to be independent. We use technology all the time, every single day.

Our sensory stories, they can actually turn the page independently. They use head switches, so it's all about where to mount the switch. So most students might use a head switch, a switch on their chair, all the time.

They're using technology, and it's really our aim to make them as independent as possible and to be able to communicate their needs.

We've got buttons so that our students can open the door, so they won't be able to open the door. So also environment control. This is so, so important when we use different types of switches and different types of software.

So our students, all our students can be included within one lesson. Sometimes you might have one lesson, one curriculum or one story, but every child can access that one story. But it could be all different methods.

So in thinking about what sort of technology will enhance our learners existence, if you like very practical things, how they are sitting, one of my learners actually doesn't even sit in her chair for most of the day. She's lying in a bed. So we have to think about how is she going to be able to use the switch to her best advantage, how she's going to be able to use it independently without us constantly hovering over her. We look at those sort of issues with all our learners. Where they're seating, how they're feeling that day, how many different medical interventions they've got to have, how many interruptions there are going to be to their day. Because it's not just our input as a teacher, it's medical staff coming into them, being able to communicate with the medical staff. It's their seating. So physio and occupational therapists will become involved. And there's a whole vast multidisciplinary team approach to how we use technology in the school. We work very, very well with our speech and language therapist, and every teaching assistant in our school has some sort of understanding. And it's really important that they understand that technology is very much a part of our learners existence and their independence.

If we weren't able to use technology in our classroom with our learners, for the majority of them, they would have absolutely no communication. That would be the starter. Some of them are very good at communicating because they can use their faces, they can use their eyes, they can use small movements of their bodies. We know them very, very well. Their families know them very, very well. But say, if they were in a situation where they were working with people that didn't know them, they wouldn't be able to say to them, I'm in pain, I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I'm uncomfortable. We need technology so that they can communicate and live lives as independently as possible. And if we didn't have technology, that just wouldn't happen. So if somebody came into me and said, right, all this has got to stop. You can't use technology anymore. You can't use switches. B their likes would be their lives. They would be shrunk. They wouldn't have as much independence and life if they didn't use technology.