

USE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

RISE CONFERENCE





“What is especially notable is how pupils with SEND are taught how to use the support that is provided and to select things for themselves that they will find useful.”

- Leigh Academy Hundred of Hoo Ofsted
2024



Jenny Fissenden
Vice Principal

Leigh Academy Hundred of Hoo
(Secondary)



Andrew Bullock
Vice Principal

Leigh Academy Hundred of Hoo
(Primary)

Our Educational Landscape

Scale & Context

The Trust Portfolio: 34 Academies

Scale: 16 Secondary | 14 Primary | 2 Specialist | 1 All-Through | 1 Nursery

Impact: 8 Academies recognised for disadvantaged attainment excellence.

Trust Benchmark: 28% Disadvantaged pupils.

LA Hoo Secondary: Comparative Profile

Metric	Hoo Secondary	Trust Average
Disadvantaged	28%	25%
SEND Total	23%	21%

SEND Provision: Hoo Secondary (88 SEN E Pupils)

17% SEN K (Support) | 6% SEN E (EHCP)

61 Pupils: Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP)

27 Pupils: Mainstream Integrated



From Fragmented Devices to Strategic Design

Early Model

- Individual school device schemes
- Financial and administrative burden
- Inconsistent implementation

Catalyst for Change

- COVID-19 accelerated, not initiated, our digital strategy
- 17,000 Chromebooks deployed in 2020
- Immediate equity of access during lockdown

A Deliberate Decision

- Devices did not return “to the shelf”
- Shift from emergency response to long-term design



From Fragmented Devices to Strategic Design

2022–2026 Roadmap

Every pupil. Every adult. A device.

Google Classroom & Google Education Suite as
core ecosystem

Structured training for staff and pupils

Digital embedded into curriculum and policy

Practice shared and refined across 34
academies (primary, secondary, specialist, all-
through)

Our Digital Evolution

Tools & Talent

Infrastructure & Access

- **1:1 Chromebooks:** Universal access for all pupils (Year 1+).
- **Google Workspace:** Core ecosystem for Education.
- **Academy Digital Toolkit:** Standardised software & resource suite.

Digital Leadership & Expertise

- **Strategic Oversight:** Dedicated Digital Leads.
- **Expert Network:** Departmental Champions & Google Trainers.
- **Professional Growth:** Targeted Digital CPD for all staff.

Pedagogy & Curriculum

- **Blended Approach:** Primarily Book-Based + Digital Curriculum.
- **Progressive Skills:** Scaffolding digital expectations by Key Stage.

How have you effectively used assistive tech to support learning?

How has assistive tech helped you make reasonable adjustments for children with disabilities?

How Assistive Tech Supports Learning & Inclusion

Visual Timetables

- **Digital Navigation:** Direct links to daily slide decks for smooth transitions.
- **Consistency:** Maintains the home-school link through a shared structure.
- **Widgit Integration:** Instant visual cues without the need for printing

Access to Slides

- **Cognitive Load:** Standardised layouts to reduce distraction and "visual noise".
- **Independence:** Pupils access resources at their own pace in class or at home.

Read&Write Toolbar

- **Adult Independence:** Replaces interventions historically reliant on a Teacher.
- **Key Support:** Includes Read Aloud, Talk & Type, and Screen Masking.
- **Vocabulary:** Built-in dictionaries for independent research and decoding.

Access to More Resources

- **Personalisation:** Digital workbooks tailored to specific needs.
- **Adaptive Tools:** Integration with platforms like Sparx and LanguageNut.
- **Embedded Feedback:** Direct auditory or video feedback within the task.

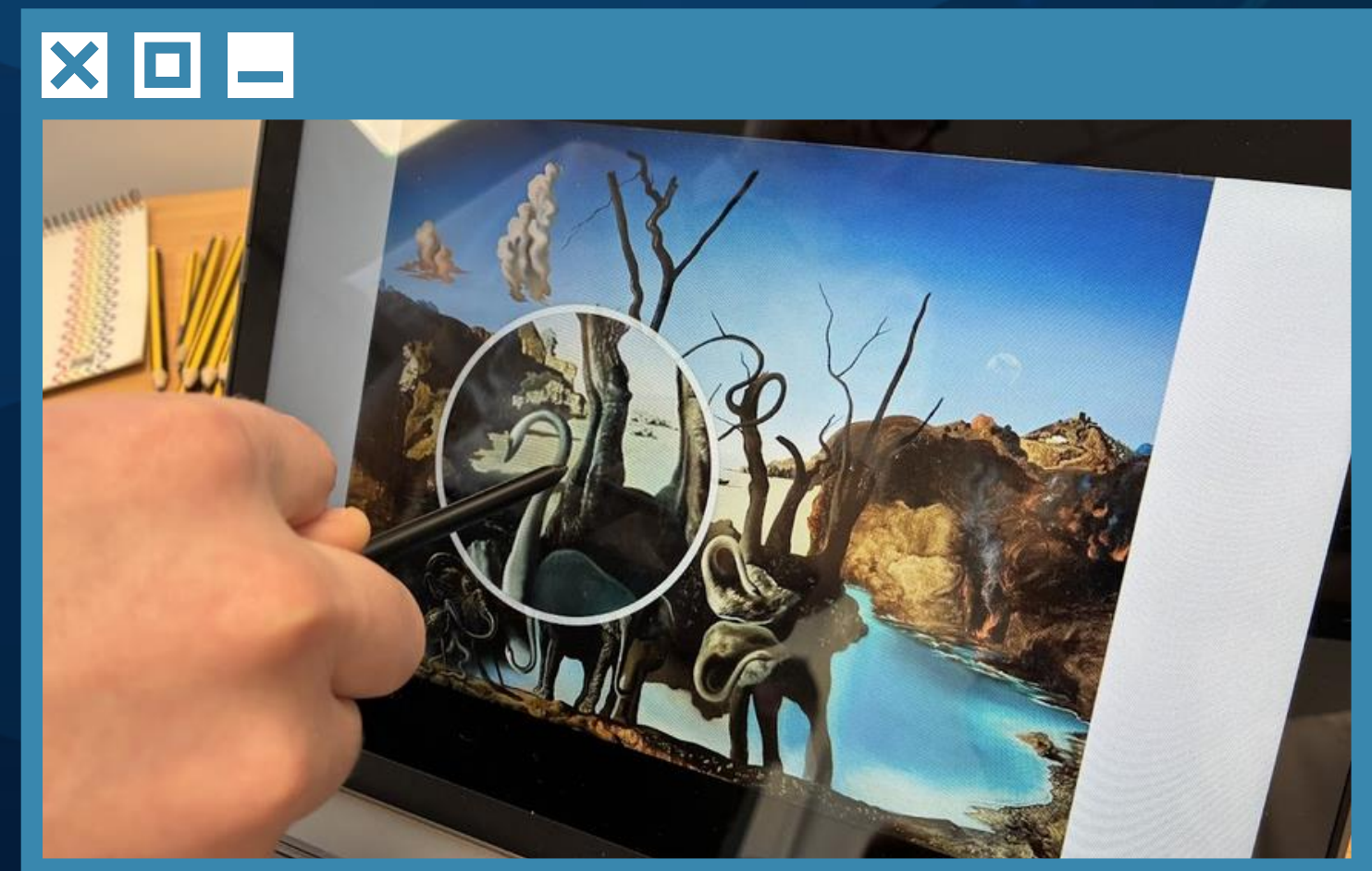
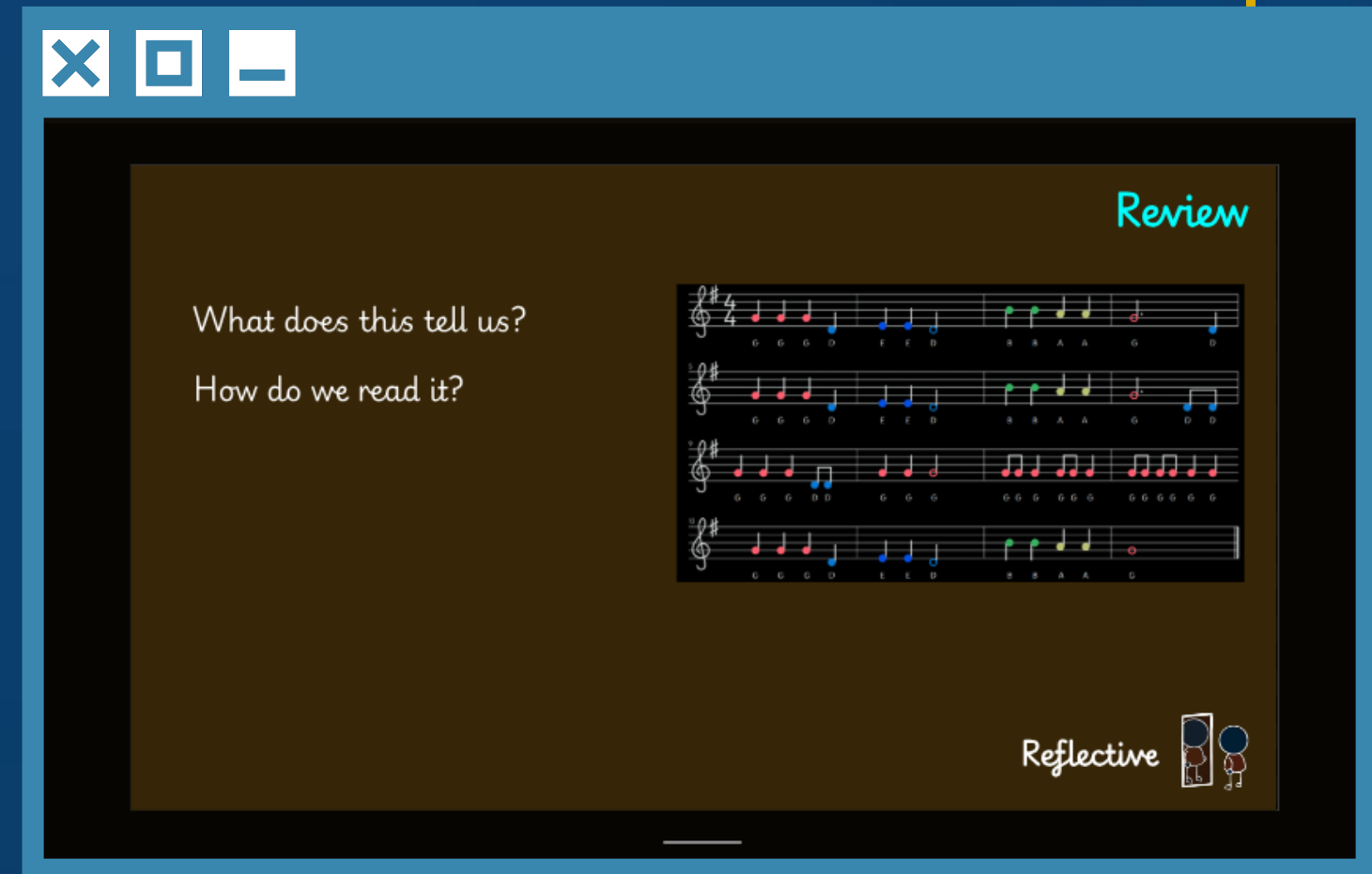
Visual Accessibility Tools

Contrast Change

- **Inverted Colours:** Increases text-to-background contrast to reduce eye strain.
- **High Contrast Mode:** Quick activation for pupils with visual impairments or photosensitivity.

Magnifiers

- **Full-screen & Docked:** Enlarges specific areas or the entire display.
- **Independent Access:** Allows pupils to view small-print resources without adult help.



Assistive Technology: Read&Write Toolbar

Literacy Support

- **Picture Dictionary:** Provides visual definitions to support vocabulary acquisition.
- **Standard Dictionary:** Offers clear text definitions for independent research.
- **Read Aloud:** Digital text-to-speech for every page, including dictionary definitions.

Writing & Engagement

- **Talk to Text:** Converts speech into written work to assist with decoding and fluency.
- **Simplify Page:** Reduces cognitive load by removing distractions and simplifying web layouts.

“I like the speaking tool because instead of typing, it uses my voice to type for me. It allows me to answer questions in more detail, rather than me having to keep pausing to think about what I am typing”

- Jess, Year 10

Visual Accessibility Tools

Visual Clarity

- Coloured overlays to reduce visual stress
- Contrast adjustments for improved readability
- Screen masking to support focus

Simplified Content

- “Simplify Page” removes distraction
- Clearer layout and reduced visual noise
- Key information made more accessible

Developing Staff Digital Expertise to Enhance Learning

Digital Planning & Preparation

- **Google Workspace** (Trust-wide standard)
- **Gemini & Teachmate AI** to adapt texts, scaffold resources and adjust reading ages
- **Notebook LM** for curriculum research and resource development
- **Canva** for high-quality instructional design

Teaching & Personalisation

- **Google Classroom** as the core delivery platform
- Subject-specific digital Tools (Sparx Maths, Reader, Science and Languagenut)

Building Expertise at Scale

- Google Workspace accreditation (Bronze | Silver | Gold)
- Google Trainers in each academy
- Digital Lead & Coordinators
- Department Digital Champions

What have been the most notable changes or advantages you've seen?

Our Most Notable Changes In the Classroom

Invisible Inclusion

Support is embedded within everyday classroom practice - not delivered as a visible intervention.

Increased Independence

Pupils select and use tools independently, reducing reliance on adult mediation.

Universal Access

All pupils can access, revisit and engage with learning materials - in academy and at home.

Immediate Support at the Point of Need

Worked examples, scaffolds and guidance are available instantly - reducing “stuck” behaviour.



Measurable Impact Across the Trust



Improved Attendance

Greater engagement and sustained access to learning.



Reduced Suspensions

Fewer incidents linked to frustration and disengagement.



Stronger SEND Progress

Improved access translating into improved outcomes.



Improved Disadvantaged Outcomes

Greater equity through universal access to support.

instantly - reducing “stuck” behaviour.

Primary Case Study



“Thomas” | Year 6 | EHCP

- Primary need: Cognition & Learning
- Working at Year 1-2 level
- 3 years of consistent 1:1 device use
- Mainstream classroom provision

Daily Routine

- Opened his personalised visual timetable independently
- Completed his sensory circuit using his digital schedule
- Accessed the day’s learning through his device

Daily Routine

- **Text-to-speech** opened up curriculum content
- **Voice recording** enabled him to capture ideas independently
- **Adjusted contrast** to support visual processing
- **Personalised work** presented discreetly

The Outcome

- ✓ **Independent in his daily routine**
Managing transitions, learning tasks and sensory regulation with minimal prompting.
- ✓ **No longer reliant on constant adult proximity**
Support was embedded into his day — not assigned to him.
- ✓ **Wider access to the curriculum**
Engaging with learning that would previously have been inaccessible.
- ✓ **Successful transition to secondary**
Moved to a LAT specialist setting with established independent habits and digital fluency.



- **Adjusted contrast** to support visual processing
- **Personalised work** presented discreetly

What were the biggest challenges you faced in implementing its use, and how did you overcome them?

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



**Safeguarding &
Misuse**



**Staff Practice &
Consistency**



**Pupil Habits &
Readiness**



**Resource
Overload**



**Financial
Sustainability**

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



Safeguarding & Misuse

Challenge: Device misuse, online risk, classroom distraction.

Our Response:

- Trust-wide filtering & monitoring (including keystroke monitoring)
- Classroom management tools (Google Class Tools, Impero)
- Clear expectations embedded in behaviour policy
- Defined Chromebook modes for lesson use

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



Staff Practice & Consistency

Challenge: Variation in confidence and implementation.

Our Response:

- Gradual, consistent roll-out across phases and departments
- Digital practice embedded in coaching, feedback and departmental PD
- Structured induction for new staff, aligned to digital expectations
- Ongoing CPD, certification pathways and Department Digital Champions

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



Pupil Habits & Readiness

Challenge: Assumed digital competence.

Our Response:

- Clear expectations for use
- Consider Pre-Requisite Skills
- Visual symbols to guide and suggest appropriate tools
- Structured training and routine-building

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



Resource Overload

Challenge: Too many tools, inconsistent materials.

Our Response:

- Trust software bundle
- Slide design expectations
- Consolidated platforms
- Centralised resource site

Implementation Challenges : **Our Response**



Financial Sustainability

Challenge: Cost at scale

Our Response:

- Trust pump-prime funding
- Phased budget integration
- Minimum parental contribution
- Strategic use of Pupil Premium

How do you assess whether or not assistive tech is effective?

Start Small - Then Scale

- Pilot approaches through smaller trials
- Evaluate impact before wider roll-out
- Refine practice before embedding across phases

Visibility Test

- Can the impact be seen when you are looking for it?
- Can it remain invisible when you are not?
(If support is obvious in every lesson, it is not yet embedded.)

Review Provision & Outcomes

- Regular review of LSPs and provision maps
- Monitoring progress of SEND and disadvantaged pupils
- Sustained upward trajectory in outcomes
- Comparison against national benchmarks

Pupil Voice

- Do pupils report increased independence?
- Do they know how to select and use tools?
- Do they feel supported without feeling singled out?

Quality Assurance & Challenge

- Learning walks with an inclusion and digital lens
- Book looks (digital and physical)
- Leadership meetings with Digital Lead
- Trust-level challenge and scrutiny

Measuring What Matters



Did you engage parents/families in decisions around the implementation of assistive tech?

Engaging Parents & Families

A Clear and Consistent Offer

- 1:1 device scheme embedded in LAT vision for 5 years
- Clear expectations for pupils and families
- Consistent platforms across phases

Communication & Transparency

- Clear explanation of the tools we use and why
- Website videos demonstrating access and functionality
- Regular newsletters linked to technology themes
- No major changes introduced without prior communication

Parent Education & Support

- Workshops on specific platforms
- Online safety training for families
- Guidance on supporting learning at home

Personalised Engagement

- Targeted conversations for individual pupils or groups
- LSPs and annual reviews include digital support as part of provision planning
- MCAS used to share learning data and progress transparently

Do you have any tips for getting started in using assistive tech?

Getting Started with Assistive Technology

Embed It in Teaching

- Align technology with curriculum design
- Make it part of everyday pedagogy
- Build it into inclusive practice (LSPs, EHCP)
- Avoid bolt-on interventions

Have a Clear Vision

- Define your roadmap and timeline
- Train staff and pupils explicitly
- Start small — scale deliberately
- Establish clear digital expectations

Secure the Foundations

- Reliable network and charging infrastructure
- Safeguarding and monitoring systems
- Clear behaviour, equipment and online safety policies

THANK YOU



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