



Marn Walker

Educational Assistive Technology Specialist

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Background and experience:

I qualified as a teacher in 2015 with a PGCE in Primary Education, having initially completed a degree in linguistics, and have since worked in a variety of school settings, including international schools in Europe and Asia. I have worked across the Early Years, Primary and lower Secondary age range, as well as working with young adult learners as part of my voluntary experience. I remained a classroom practitioner until 2022, within this time becoming a member of the school leadership team as a Phase Leader. In this role, I was responsible for organising and managing a number of classes and promoting high-quality teaching and learning across the key stage.

Drawing on my previous experience working in Special Education settings, in my roles as classroom teacher and Phase Leader I have been responsible for evaluating and planning to meet the learning needs of children and also supporting young people's behaviour and emotional wellbeing. I have worked alongside children and young people with a range of additional needs, facilitating their integration in a mainstream setting by liaising with class teachers and other relevant staff. I have led professional development sessions for staff based around a variety of areas, mostly focused on SEND and classroom behaviour management. I have taken part in CPD training in Autism Awareness, Children's Mental Health, and completed a SEND diploma. To ensure I am a confident user of technology, I have also completed Google Educator training, including Google Classroom and Google Meet, and Apple Teacher training through the Apple professional learning platform.

I joined Education and Case Management Services as part of the Education team in 2022, as a Specialist Input Teacher and project worker. During my time working at ECMS, my role has developed alongside the evolving needs of a growing Education team. As a specialist teacher, I have worked under the direction of the education advisors in order to provide one-to-one input for individual children and young people. This has included delivering specific teaching linked to the ASDAN qualification or subject specific input such as English and maths, individualised to meet the needs of each young person.

I have also taken an active role in supporting clients' needs with projects including researching educational settings according to specific criteria, collating educational data, and creating written reports. My research requires excellent ICT skills, and I make calls and contact a variety of companies and providers to complete research tasks. This then results in a robust document that addresses the query and gives the client a solution or positive outcome.

As an active member of the Education team, I have developed the practitioner aspect of my role, attending client visits with Education Advisors and reflecting on the diverse needs of the children and young people that ECMS support. As part of my role, I have developed a working knowledge about the implications of cerebral palsy and acquired brain injury, and how this impacts on learning. I have been able to consider the needs of individuals with disabilities across the age range, including levels of severity, multiple disabilities, and their impact on development. I understand how children and young people differ in their approaches to learning and I am committed to creating opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

I have a sound understanding of the need to address the child's individual outcomes and will address the child or young person's requirements on a needs-led basis. As part of my planning process for home education packages, I consult with teachers and therapists to plan for the child or young person's needs. I also understand the importance of a continual dialogue with teachers or support workers, ensuring I work in partnership to find solutions and therefore maximising engagement in learning. This approach results in a bespoke learning plan for the client, taking into account their individual needs.

I use my teaching experience to incorporate assessment objectives within any planning, including those of the National Curriculum, the Engagement Model or the client's EHCP. I also advise on ways to capture progress and attainment, for example by using the implementation of software packages such as Evidence for Learning.

I have considerable expertise in creating home education packages for clients with a range of cognitive and additional communication needs. I confidently use InPrint symbol-based software to create modified storybooks and corresponding low-tech resources, for example vocabulary flashcards or sentence level activities. I also incorporate high tech resources such as Clicker8 boards, that further reinforce concepts or vocabulary and are personalised to the client.

As part of my role developing learning packages and resources, I have gained an understanding of the importance of both 'low-tech' and 'high tech' systems that can enrich a Total Communication approach for a young person. I understand and have become skilled in the use of assistive technology to help overcome a young person's barriers to learning. I am particularly interested in the impact of executive function difficulties on a young person's education with regard to their development, learning and engagement. I am familiar with assistive technology that can help lessen this impact, for example Read&Write, Clicker 8, and the Inspiration11 mind mapping and planning software.

I am passionate about providing young people with the independence to learn in an environment that allows them to use their strengths to overcome their challenges. Technology is a vital tool for many of the children and young people we work with at ECMS, and as an experienced teacher I understand how important it is to be able to use technology effectively both in lessons and beyond the classroom. I am a confident practitioner in the use of InPrint 3, Clicker 8, Symwriter, Boardmaker, Voice Output Communication Aids (for example Smartbox), and accessibility features for Microsoft 365, iPhone, and iPad. I can provide training for staff regarding how to implement technology into a curriculum; for example, by using software such as Clicker or InPrint, the accessibility features of Apple and Windows devices, or specific applications to support teaching and assessment.

I am able to provide follow-up reviews and ongoing summary updates of the young person's progress using assistive technology, where appropriate linking this to the young person's EHCP. I also consult with families about their views and aspirations for the young person, considering how technology may enhance a client's independence or offer practical benefits for their future, such as in preparation for adulthood.

In all previous roles, I have effectively engaged with and supported parents, outside agencies, and other stakeholders using my excellent communication and interpersonal skills. I am confident in working alongside a multi-disciplinary team, including educators, case managers, and therapists, in order to promote a holistic approach to education that focuses on meeting the client's needs via relationship building and engagement.

I am a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates how choices and actions affect a young person, their parents, and other professionals in the learning community. I actively seek opportunities to grow professionally, and I look forward to further developing in my role at ECMS.

Professional Qualifications and Memberships:

- PGCE in Primary Education (QTS) – 2015
- BA (Hons) in Linguistics – 2011