



Mhari Storey

Education and Assistive Technology Specialist

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Background and experience:

I qualified as an Early Years teacher in 2009 and began my career in a nursery setting in Gateshead. I subsequently moved to a specialist school in North Tyneside, where I taught across EYFS, KS1 and KS2 until 2018. I have worked During my career, I have supported pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, including cerebral palsy, autism, ADHD, acquired brain injury (ABI), and children with complex medical needs across a wide ability range.

I have enjoyed many opportunities and had extensive experience to develop my understanding of the use of alternative and assistive communication (AAC) to facilitate learning and communication including low tech systems such as paper-based symbol support, communication books, and switches as well as high tech devices including Voice Output Communication Aids such as Dynavox. I am passionate about the development of Total Communication environments in which staff use a different systems to help children to express themselves including signing, gesture, vocalisation, visuals and touch (such as on-body signing) through to those who can access a device to then type and record learning at a higher level. I am committed to empowering both staff and children to use AAC tools effectively, and I work closely with families to promote a consistent, holistic approach to communication and learning and ensuring a Total Communication approach.

I have worked collaboratively with Speech and Language Therapists (SALT), Occupational Therapists (OT), and Physiotherapists (PT) to ensure all pupils could access learning through both high- and low-tech approaches. I am confident in working with colleagues to explore the best access methods for the individual whether this be via direct access, switches or eye gaze.

In 2012, I completed a PGCE in Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Practice at Northumbria University. I have extensive experience in planning and managing sensory integration, speech and language interventions, writing sensory profiles, and working with children with attachment difficulties using trauma informed practice. Later in my career worked closely with Northumbria University to review and evaluate the delivery of the SEND teaching modules within their Primary Education degree programme to help student teachers gain the right knowledge.

I have worked across two groups of private nurseries in the North East as both SENDCo and Area SENDCo roles. I worked closely with young children to develop personalised learning plans, contributed to the writing and review of Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) and I value the opportunity to work collaboratively with families and external professionals. My input has included the development of early communication skills. I also represented settings at Early Years panels, contributing to discussions around EHCPs and funding allocations. I have also taken part in a range of multi-disciplinary team meetings including safeguarding reviews and Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings.

In 2020, I joined a specialist secondary school in Northumberland as Head of Key Stage 3. I was responsible for the teaching and learning of Computing and IT across the school and taught students across Key Stages 3, 4, and Post-16. I ensured robust E-safety practices and managed the Safe Use of ICT for vulnerable learners. I also led the delivery of specialist SALT and literacy interventions, including Colourful Semantics, Memory Magic, and Blank Level assessments, and delivered staff training in collaboration with the SALT team. I am proficient in creating accessible resources using tools such as InPrint and Clicker to support teaching and learning and the development of literacy skills. This led to improved outcomes for young people and enabled them to make progress across the curriculum. I am able to help staff to maximise the benefits of online learning platforms to create personalised learning activities, such as Helpkidzlearn, Choose it Maker and Insight. I completed the National Professional Qualification for Learning, Behaviour and Culture (NPQLBC) in 2024 and have undertaken additional professional development in Thrive, PACE, Team Teach, and Read Write Inc.

I am confident in the use of a range of assessment tools, including PIVATS, Routes for Learning, WELCOMM, and the Boxall Profile, to track progress and align outcomes with EHCP targets. I place strong emphasis on evaluating the impact of interventions, including assistive technology, and adapting provision to ensure optimal outcomes.

In my current role, I work in partnership with the Lead Education and Assistive Technology Specialist to evaluate and embed assistive technology across the curriculum for children and young adults. The role combines my expertise in education, accessibility, and technology to promote inclusive learning environments, ensure compliance with accessibility standards, and improve learner independence and achievement. I provide guidance on its effective integration and produce ongoing reviews and summary reports to monitor progress, ensuring alignment with each child's EHCP outcomes.

I understand the importance of identifying the right assistive technology solution, along with a robust and continuous assessment process to ensure that client motivation and engagement is at the heart of our aspirations for the young person and their family and aim always to empower the team around the child to enable them to become as effective as possible in their communication skills.

Professional Qualifications and Memberships:

- 2009- BA Hons Early Primary Education with QTS – Northumbria University
- 2012- PGCE Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Practice- Northumbria University
- 2018- SENDCo Award
- 2024- NPQLBC (Learning, Behaviour and Culture) Best Practice Network