

Meet me at the TES Special Needs Midlands 2012 Show

This takes place at the NEC on Friday 29 and Saturday 30 June. I am running a session 12.30 -1.30 on the Saturday called *Helping pupils with dyscalculia engage with the numberness of numbers*. It will cover the early signs of dyscalculia and how to assess for the condition. It will present different techniques and guidance for teaching basic numeracy.

Later in the day at 3.30 I will be running *Using computer games in the primary inclusive classroom* with Donna Burton Wilcock, internationally renowned expert on games and CEO of the very successful Immersive Education. We will be looking at the new demand for gaming in the classroom and how games making can help pupils develop self-reliance, problem solving and critical thinking skills. View and book seminars here <http://secure2.eventadv.com/tesmidlands/step1.asp>

But enough about me. What else will you see? I hope to go to Carol Allen's session *Supporting visual learners in the inclusive classroom* on Friday at 11pm, looking at how to create an inclusive environment using digital media and visual resources and *How we created a 21st century special school* on Friday at 2pm run by Maxine Pittaway, head teacher of award-winning special school St Christopher's in Wrexham.

My three 'not to be missed' exhibitors are:

ActiVise Software (www.bactivebrainsolutions.com). This looks interesting and very timely as we enter exam season. It is a learning and revision software resource for learners of any age and ability studying any subject. The software consists of a framework of six interactive games which can be populated with personalised content.

Texthelp (<http://www.texthelp.com>) help will be demonstrating Fluency Tutor which I have seen demonstrated online. It is designed to assess and improve pupils' reading and comprehension levels and I wrote about it for Special Children magazine in my article on Reading Aloud.

Dore is a Programme (www.dore.co.uk) offered by a company in Stratford upon Avon. It assesses and addresses problems which affect co-ordination, eye tracking and attention span and makes these underlying skills become more automatic so that children can concentrate better and learn more effectively. Up till now it has only been available for home use but at the show they will be showing schools how they can use their Programme in schools.

Communication and PECs

☒ There was so much information and so many new products for BETT this year that I could not include them all in my Guardian article but some of the best of the rest will feature on the blog over the next couple of weeks.

It seems that some parents have created wonderfully innovative solutions for communication. Speaks4me® was created for Callum who has severe autism and learning difficulties and cannot speak. It has images which the user drags and drops to form a "virtual" sentence. Click on "Speak" and Speaks4me® will speak the words. It is similar to the Picture Exchange Communication System or PECS™; so most users will adapt to using it quite easily. <http://www.speaks4me.com/>

'Logan was a great user of PECS, the well known picture exchange communication system, but he had no speech and I wanted him to be able to order his own burger when we went out

at the weekend.’ said Glen Dobbs, who has a 12yr old son with autism ‘There was nothing on the market that was easy enough for Logan to use or robust enough to withstand the rough handling I knew he would give it’ so says the creator of Logan ProxTalker. It is portable, very robust and easy to use, ticking all the boxes for use by people with autism, their families and school.

Logan Technologies is keen to set up some key user trials and like to hear from prospective customers who would like to try before they buy. To arrange to try a Logan ProxTalker or for more information contact sandra@logan-technologies.com or visit www.logan-technologies.co.uk

BSF Here I come!

✘ It’s official! I have a new job. I am now an associate with a brand new company, Accessible Futures Ltd – ‘the new name in SEN ICT consultancy within Building Schools for the Future’. I will be working with special schools, local authorities, bidders and builders on BSF projects. Accessible Futures Ltd might not make the world a better place but, with a bit of luck, we can make some schools a better place for kids with disabilities.

The company is the brainchild of John Liddle who was Head of Services to Education at AbilityNet. He has a strong background in Higher Ed as well as in assessment, technology and BSF. So far he has signed us up to work with Wolverhampton and Kent and there are ongoing conversations with other parties.

✘ Have a look at the site <http://www.accessiblefutures.co.uk/index.html> It tells you

all about the company and has a picture of me with new short hair cut for the autumn and John in work mode.

Here comes BETT

Kids have only just gone back to school and already BETT preparations are in full swing. Last week I was down in London at the BESA offices judging one of the awards. It was a great day out and I don't know what was better- the discussions with my fellow judges or the brilliant banquet at the floating Chinese restaurant afterwards.

<http://www.lotusfloating.co.uk/>