

NEO1™



Special Needs Success story

William Brookes Comprehensive, Telford

Teaching special needs students in mainstream education and helping them keep up with the rest of their class is an ongoing challenge in schools across the UK.

At William Brookes School, a comprehensive of 937 students in Much Wenlock, near Telford, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Lesley Ravenscroft is always on the look-out for new teaching methods and tools to help her develop and motivate her students.

"Years 7 to 9 are particularly challenging," says Lesley. "They still have to take all subjects, even those that don't particularly interest them. At the same time their hormones are peaking and we all know how that can affect their moods and distract them from things like schoolwork!"

"I read about AlphaSmart computer companions (Neo) in a magazine, and thought they might be useful for some of our students, particularly those with dyslexia and dyspraxia.

"I decided on the AlphaSmart Neo as there is less opportunity for the students to fiddle with them. They can use it for writing but they can't access the Internet or spend time changing the document's appearance with different fonts and graphics."

Lesley had a £1,000 grant from the Princes Trust, which she used to buy seven Neos. The first children to use them were those who had been assessed by the LEA special needs team and recommended to use ICT in lessons – children with dyspraxia, dyslexia, Aspergers syndrome and moderate learning disabilities.

Report Continued Overleaf

For more information on AlphaSmart Special Needs Solutions please call FREEphone **0800 917 4447** or visit www.alphasmart.co.uk



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32 Harbour Exchange Square
London E14 9GE

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This has now been extended to students with other special needs, including ADHD and visual impairment. When you ask Lesley about the results she's achieved since introducing the new equipment to her students, she doesn't hesitate. "They are the best piece of technology we've bought for years!" she says.

One of the major benefits is improved student motivation. Boys in particular are well-known for being reluctant writers, but Lesley has found introducing ICT has encouraged them – particularly some more challenging Year 9 boys. "They now get on with their work, and they certainly prefer it to writing," she says.

"Instead of producing baby scrawl with lots of spelling mistakes, their work is now of the same quality as everyone else's, which is a huge encouragement. For students with dyslexia, we've found that it helps to increase the font size, as that makes it easier for them to see their mistakes and correct them. "Now they can stop worrying about the physical process of writing and making mistakes and concentrate on what they want to say."

The Neos are spread throughout the school, from Year 7 to Year 11. They slot smoothly into the normal teaching routine, aided by the fact that they are battery powered.

The special needs students all have an Individual Education Plan, so their teachers know they use a Neo. The student can sit anywhere in the classroom and the teacher tells them to take out their Neo at the appropriate time.

"I am really happy with the Neos - they've been very successful with our students. And they are getting better with the test of time."

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