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21 August 2024

Dear Lord Addington,

I am writing to you following the debate on Friday 26 July, concerning the Committee Report of the Education for 11- to 16-year-olds.

In the debate, you raised the important matter of students being able to use accessibility features when learning and during assessment, so that those who struggle with reading and writing are better included in the system.

The Department for Education has worked to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs have more access and accessibility features which can reduce or remove barriers to learning.

Mainstream school staff were able to access training to increase their confidence using assistive technology during Spring 2022 and Spring/Summer 2023 as part of a pilot to test the impact on teachers and learners. This training taught staff about the use of, assessment for and expected outcomes of assistive technology (AT), in particular the technology schools already have available or can easily obtain. The programme used the resources created for the AT Pilot including case studies, videos, short introductions, and a self-audit tool which schools can use to identify their key areas for development.

The new national professional qualification (NPQ) for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) will incorporate content on the use of educational software and assistive technology. From September 2024, this NPQ will be the new mandatory qualification for SENCOs.

From September 2025, all initial teacher training and statutory induction training for new teachers will be based in the updated Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework which contains new content on using specialist technology to support pupils with SEND.

The Department is also working closely with Ofqual to build the evidence base and understand the implications of onscreen assessments on schools and different cohorts of pupils. The evidence will inform any decisions about the future of onscreen assessments.

I am copying this letter to all those who contributed and will place a copy in the House library.

With my very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Baroness Twycross', written in a cursive style.

BARONESS TWYXCROSS