

WHAT IT IS AND WHY

The discovery day

did it reach the child?

One day, in your school, in your classrooms. It is where every piece of work with us starts, because we will not sell you training for a problem nobody has named yet. The question we are answering is the one at the top of this page.

What a discovery day is not

Not an inspection

Not a training day

Not a procurement exercise

We start with what you already own. Teach what you were going to teach. That is the point.

OUR ROLE ON THE DAY

We are there to find out what is brilliant and what is quietly not, and to say so plainly.

Not to inspect anyone. Coaching-led means we sit with a member of staff and a learner rather than standing at the front of a training room. We observe, we ask, and we work alongside.

We will name the gap. We will never name a member of staff, and children are never named — in the room or in the report.

At least half the day is in normal lessons, with your teachers and teaching assistants. The rest is with the people who hold the decisions: leadership, your digital lead, your technical staff.

By the end you will have been listened to, and we will have seen the school as it really runs rather than as a document describes it.

FOUR THINGS, IN WRITING

What you have afterwards

01

Baseline assessment

Where you are now, scored against the seven questions below. A starting number, not a verdict.

02

Draft strategy roadmap

What to do, in what order, over what term. Written to be argued with and then agreed.

03

Governors' report

A short paper your committee can read without translation: progress, value for money, what happens next.

04

The data that follows

We agree how you will know it worked, and when we will check. That movement is your evidence.

The seven questions we assess against



01 Provision

What is already in place for the learners who need it.



02 Access

Whether a learner can start the work without waiting for an adult.



03 Design

Whether the lesson was planned with those learners in mind, not adapted afterwards.



04 Capability

Who on your staff can already use what you own, and who was never shown how.



05 Belonging

Whether a child can use what they need without it setting them apart.



06 Trust

Whether staff can say what is not working, and be heard.



07 Evidence

Whether the school would know if it had worked.

Why it comes first

Schools rarely arrive here empty-handed.

There is usually a strategy that cost senior hours, staff meetings that were given up, communication devices and software that were paid for and a training package someone signed off in good faith. None of that is wasted.

But it does mean the honest first question is not "what training do you want?" It is "what is already here, and where does it stop?"

Why teaching assistants, specifically

In every special school, the adult holding the device is a teaching assistant.

That is scale and identity together. There are 295,183 full-time equivalent teaching assistants in England's schools, alongside 466,372 teachers. In specialist provision they are not support staff at the edge of the work. They are the work.

DfE, School Workforce in England (June 2026). EEF, Deployment of Teaching Assistants, third edition (March 2025).

If the TAs are not in the room, the change does not reach the learner. It reaches the staff meeting and stops there. So we do not observe them from a distance. We sit with them.

They are also, routinely, the people who already know which setting, which switch and which workaround makes a device work for a particular learner. Almost none of that is written down anywhere. We would like to write it down.

Why it has to be face to face

The government's own standard says a stand-alone day without a specific focus is unlikely to last.

We agree, and that is precisely why the discovery day is not a training day. It is the work that gives the training a specific focus, so that what follows is built on something real.

The Education Endowment Foundation found that the more of the effective mechanisms a programme uses, the greater the impact on pupil attainment. Those mechanisms are modelling a technique, rehearsing it, giving feedback, prompting, and repeating it in context. Every one of them needs someone in the room.

DfE, Standard for Teachers' Professional Development: implementation guidance (2016). EEF, Effective Professional Development (2021).

THE GAP LEADERS CANNOT SEE FROM THE OFFICE

73%

**of headteachers said
PD time improved
teaching**

29%

**of their
teachers agreed**

That gap is not a failure of leadership. It is what happens when nobody is in the room to watch the training land.

EEF, Effective Professional Development (2021), reporting teacher survey data from 2018.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE ON ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The kit arrived. The knowledge did not travel with it.

Access to assistive technology in English schools has nearly doubled since 2023. Over the same period, the proportion of teachers who could say whether it was fit for purpose went the wrong way.

This is a national pattern, not a judgement on any one school. It is also the exact gap a day in your classrooms is built to find: what you own, who can use it, and where it stops travelling.

Department for Education, Technology in Schools Survey 2024 to 2025, published November 2025.

60% of primary teachers now have access to assistive technology, up from 34% in 2023. Secondary, 59%, up from 40%. The devices arrived.

DfE, Technology in Schools Survey 2024–25 (2025)

39% of teachers do not know whether that assistive technology is fit for purpose. Only 41% say it is. Nobody can tell you if it works.

DfE, Technology in Schools Survey 2024–25 (2025)

46% of schools offer staff no training at all in using assistive technology. Which is why nobody can tell you.

DfE, Technology in Schools Survey 2024–25 (2025)

£8.6m invested in assistive and inclusive technology across the England market, against £96m of revenue. Personalised learning took £187m on £77m. The money flows away from inclusion.

DfE, Assessment of the Education Technology Market in England (June 2026)

IF YOU WANT TO TALK IT THROUGH FIRST

Book 45 minutes with Nici

No preparation needed, and no obligation to book a day at the end of it.

unbarrier.me/book

or unbarrier.me/audit for the free readiness check first.

Sources. Department for Education, Technology in Schools Survey 2024 to 2025 (November 2025). Department for Education, Assessment of the Education Technology Market in England (June 2026). Department for Education, School Workforce in England (June 2026). Department for Education, Standard for Teachers' Professional Development: implementation guidance (July 2016). Education Endowment Foundation, Effective Professional Development (2021). Education Endowment Foundation, Deployment of Teaching Assistants, third edition (March 2025).

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