

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 feed straight into your published inclusion strategy.

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, devices 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 most mainstream classrooms the adult sitting closest to the learner who is struggling is a teaching assistant.

The current EEF guidance is blunt about what that costs when it goes unplanned: TAs should supplement the teacher, not replace them, and pupils who struggle most should spend at least as much time with the teacher as everyone else.

EEF, Deployment of Teaching Assistants, third edition (March 2025). Blatchford et al., DISS project (2009).

Most teachers still have no allocated planning or feedback time with the TA working in their own room. That is a deployment problem, not a people problem, and it is fixable in a term.

If the TAs are not in the room, the change does not reach the classroom. It reaches the staff meeting and stops there. They are also, routinely, the people who already have the best workarounds. We would like to write those 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.

WHAT THE NATIONAL PICTURE SAYS

You already own more than you think. Nobody can tell you if it works.

39% of teachers do not know whether the assistive technology in their school is fit for purpose. Only 41% say it is.

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

81% of primary leaders know their mainstream technology already has accessibility built in — down from 89% in 2023.

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

22% of leaders have a formal plan for evaluating whether their technology works. Only 35% have any monitoring at all, down from 41% in 2023.

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)

THE DEADLINE

31 December 2026

You have to publish an inclusion strategy. It has to set out the activities you are investing in to alleviate barriers to learning and participation, and the budgeted costs. The date is the DfE's, not ours.

Most schools can describe the activity. Far fewer can evidence whether any of it reached a child. That is the half of the statement a discovery day is built to give you.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund for schools: conditions of grant 2026 to 2027, Department for Education (gov.uk).

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, Inclusive Mainstream Fund for schools: conditions of grant 2026 to 2027. Department for Education, Technology in Schools Survey 2024 to 2025 (November 2025). 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). Blatchford et al., Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools, DCSF-RR154 (2009).

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