



Exploring Internet Resources for Pupils with Additional Support Needs



CALL Information Sheet 22

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(Updated, January 2005)



Communication Aids for Language and Learning
University of Edinburgh
Paterson's Land, Holyrood Road
Edinburgh, EH8 8AQ
Tel 0131 651 6236
Fax 0131 651 6234
Email callcentre@ed.ac.uk
<http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk>

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What is the Internet?

The Internet is a collection of inter-connected computer systems developed over the past thirty years to provide rapid communication and access to information throughout the world. It is made up of a number of different, but related, elements:

The WorldWide Web (WWW) - a massive collection of pages of information, materials and resources, stored on computers throughout the world, with each page having a unique address, allowing it to be accessed from anywhere in the world.

Electronic Mail (Email) - a system for the almost instantaneous transmission of messages from a computer in one location to another, for collection by the intended recipient of the message.

Usenet Newsgroups and other Discussion Groups - open electronic discussion groups where people can exchange views and discuss topics of mutual interest. Though it is possible to get useful information here, much of the system has been taken over by inappropriate material. There are a number of "closed" mailing lists which are much safer to use, e.g. SENIT, (a discussion group for those with a particular interest in finding out about IT solutions to support pupils.)

Chat - facilities that allow people to type messages / send files / speak to each other in "real" time via computer - either on a one-to-one basis, or within a group. MSN Messenger and Yahoo Chat are examples of these. Use of general chat rooms by children should be carefully supervised. There are a small number of "secure" chat rooms, which have been set up specifically for young people with a disability, e.g. the VI Scotland chat room.

Connecting to the Web.

There are five basic requirements for connecting to the web: a phone line; a computer; a modem; appropriate software; registration with an Internet Service Provider (ISP). Modern PCs and Apple Macintosh computers are suitable for connecting to the Web. A modem is a device that converts computer data into a form suitable for transmission over a standard dial-up phone line. The most important aspect of a modem to consider is the speed at which it transmits data. Most current dial-up modems have a speed of 56K bits per second. Beware of second-hand modems - you might be offered a modem with a speed of only 2,400 bits per second, which would be totally unsuitable, taking ages to download even a simple page of text. Even a 56K modem can be painfully slow if you are trying to download a lot of data, e.g. a sound or video clip so Broadband is now a much better option (see below).

To view pages of information on the Web you need web browser software. There are two main programs for this: *Netscape Navigator* and *Internet Explorer*, both of which are available free. One will usually be provided by an Internet Service Provider, but it is often possible to get the latest version of a browser on CDs issued with computer magazines. *Opera* is an alternative browser that some people prefer, generally providing slightly faster downloads of pages of information. People with a visual impairment often use *pwWebspeak*, a web browser that automatically reads pages aloud. The program runs on a PC only, is free and

can be downloaded from <http://www.soundlinks.com/pwgen.htm>. Unfortunately, not all web sites have been designed to be read well in this way.

You need an Internet Service Provider to provide you with a phone number to use to attach to a computer that will act as a gateway to the Internet. ISPs include AOL, Freeserve, Demon, BT and many more. If you can access the Internet you can get lists of ISPs in the UK at <http://www.ispreview.co.uk/> and at <http://www.net4nowt.com/> Internet Service Providers vary considerably in the services and support they provide costs are dropping all the time. A list of current "free" services is available at <http://uk-bargains.co.uk/free-internet.html>. Whenever you sign up, you can almost guarantee that you could have got a better deal somewhere else a month later!

Broadband

Broadband is a new form of internet connectivity, allowing pages and files to be downloaded at up to ten times the speed of a standard phone connection. This makes it much more feasible to download video clips and other large files from the internet. A broadband connection can be left "on" permanently and allows a phone to be used simultaneously. Unfortunately, broadband is only available where telephone exchanges have been upgraded, or where cable television is available. There has been a rapid expansion of broadband over the past couple of years so that it is now available across most of the country. You can find out if your phone line has been upgraded at the BT web site - <http://www.bt.com/broadband>.

Finding Information on the Web

When you connect to the web you will usually be taken to your ISP's Home Page. Depending on the services your provider offers, you may be offered *links* to news pages, hobby pages, entertainment pages, etc. By clicking on one of these links with a mouse you will be taken to the page you want. There is a convention that these links to other sites will be shown as blue text, but they can also be shown as graphics, or as text in an alternative colour. If you are not sure if a graphic on screen is a link, move your mouse over it - if it is a link, the usual mouse pointer will be shown as a pointing hand. If a person has difficulty using a mouse, later versions of Internet Explorer and Netscape allow links to be located by pressing the TAB key and selected using RETURN on the keyboard.

Every page of information on the web has a unique address, known as a *Uniform Resource Locator* (URL). If you know the URL of the site that you want, you can simply type it into the appropriate place in your browser, press RETURN and you will be taken to the location you desire. If you don't get taken where you want, there are two possible causes: a typing error, or you tried to access a page that no longer exists on a particular web site. If you tried to access a page that no longer exists, you will be given an 'Error 404' Message, which states that the page you are looking for cannot be found. Since web sites are dynamic, usually being updated at regular intervals, it is possible that the information has simply been moved and you may be able to find it by 'backtracking' on the host server until you find pages that are still "live". For example, if you get an error when you use <http://www.wesite.com/information/page1>, try <http://www.wesite.com/information> and if that does not work, try <http://www.wesite.com>.

Backtracking won't work if a site has been moved from one server to another, unless the owner put in a 'redirection' command on the old site. In such cases, you may have to use a *Search Engine* to find the information you want.

It is sometimes possible to guess the URL of a company or organisation. International (particularly American) companies tend to just add ".com" to the name of the company, thus

IBM's web address is <http://www.ibm.com>. International organisations generally add ".org" so the United Nations can be found at <http://www.un.org>. In the UK, companies often have a ".co.uk" suffix, while charities and organisations often end with ".org.uk".

Search Engines

Search Engines are generally free services which index web sites in some way so that they can be searched for information. Some search engines work by using a 'robot' to trawl continually through all web sites, noting the contents of every site and then being able to offer a list of sites containing a particular word or phrase that is being sought by the user. Other search engines try to assess the general content of a site and offer the searcher a list of thematic headings to follow until a list of potentially useful sites is given.

The Search Engine Watch web site (<http://www.searchenginewatch.com>) lists the major search engines, has tips on how to use the engines and provides other useful information on conducting a web search.

Search engines vary in their efficiency and the emphasis they give to different factors in coming up with a list of desired sites. Regular web users usually develop a preference for different engines for different tasks. In the case of recent Apple Macintosh computers, the Sherlock search tool can be configured to automatically search the web for a particular word using a number of search engines at the same time. Unless you are looking for a very obscure term, this can represent overkill!

To compare some of the engines, we tried searching for the word 'Diplodocus' using different engines, as if searching for information for a 'dinosaur' project, noting the number of 'hits', where this information was given, and the sites at the top of the list.

Search Engine	No. of Hits	First two sites found	Comments
All the web (www.alltheweb.com)	33,640	Enchanted Learning Diplodocus Home Page	First site good, second is "down".
Alta Vista (www.altavista.com)	8,288	Enchanted Learning Diplodocus Home Page	First site good, second is "down".
AOL Search (search.aol.com)	15,600	Iconos Diplodocus Home Page	First site irrelevant, second "down"
Ask Jeeves (www.askjeeves.com)	?	Prehistoric World Images Wyoming Dinosaur Center	Provides useful tools for secondary search
Google (www.google.com)	18,200	Enchanted Learning Diplodocus Home Page	First site good, second is "down".
LookSmart (http://www.looksmart.com)	>1000	Dinosauricon Dinosaur Detectives	Both good sites. First nine links are to "reviewed sites"
Lycos (http://www.lycos.com)	30,922	Enchanted Learning Diplodocus Home Page	First site good, second is "down".
MSN Search (http://search.msn.com)	9877	Dinosaur Detectives Dinosauricon	Two relevant sites - only engine to place NHM in top two
Netscape Search (http://search.netscape.com)	15,600	Iconos Diplodocus Home Page	First site irrelevant, second "down"
Teoma (www.teoma.com)	7,800	Prehistoric World Images Wyoming Dinosaur Center	Both sites relevant
Yahoo (http://www.yahoo.com)	16,200	Iconos Enchanted Learning	First site irrelevant, second good.

Search engines are usually designed to search for text phrases on web pages, but some, such as AlltheWeb, AltaVista and Google, can be used to search specifically for photographs, video or sound files. This can be very useful if you are searching for a photograph of a lighthouse, for example, for a particular project.

Refining a Search

Search engines will generally prioritise a list of sites offered in some way, depending on where on the site the target words appear, how often the site is used, location and other factors. If you are offered a million pages with the words you are looking for, there is unlikely to be any point in looking at pages outwith the top 50 to 100 in the list. Nevertheless, it can be daunting to be offered so many sites, particularly when the vast majority will be of little relevance to what you are really looking for. Most search engines provide means to refine a search. Here's an example of how a search can be refined using Google:

Try	Target words / phrase	No. of hits	Comments
1	Special Educational Needs	2,070,000	This finds ALL sites with ANY of these words!
2	"Special Educational Needs"	145,000	This finds all sites with this complete phrase
3	+ "Special Educational Needs" + "Scotland"	10,600	This finds all sites with BOTH phrases
4	+ "Special Educational Needs" + "Scotland" - "dyslexia"	9,700	This finds the same sites as 4, but EXCLUDES any mentioning "dyslexia".

SEN Resources on the Internet

Search Engines

Top 5

All the web (<http://www.alltheweb.com>) - uncluttered interface, allowing searches for text, pictures, video and sound clips.

AltaVista (<http://uk.altavista.com>) - very comprehensive index to sites on the web - includes image search and foreign language translation.

Ask Jeeves for Kids (<http://www.ajkids.com/>) - simplified search procedure aimed at children - will only find 'child-friendly' sites.

Google (<http://www.google.com>) - probably the best search engine with a "clean" interface and very effective search tool, including image search.

MSN (<http://search.msn.com>) - probably the most effective of the "corporate" search engines.

Others

Search the Web (<http://www.searchtheweb.com>) - not a search engine, but general information on search engines, including hints on how to search and child-friendly search engines.

AOL Search (<http://search.aol.com>) - straightforward and relatively easy to use, with search tool and thematic headings.

Ask Jeeves (<http://www.ask.com/>) - searches conducted by 'natural language' questions - sometimes leads to unexpected results.

Direct Hit (<http://www.directhit.com>) - search by thematic listings or by word - uses Ask Jeeves engine, but interface not as user friendly.

HotBot (<http://www.hotbot.com>) - easy to use and relatively effective, with search tool and thematic headings.

iWon (<http://www.iwon.com>) - very cluttered front page, with thematic listings and news headlines, but a reasonably effective search tool.

Look Smart (<http://www.looksmart.com>) - search by thematic listings or by word.

Lycos UK (<http://www.lycos.co.uk>) - search by word, or by thematic listing - effective but cluttered.

Netscape (<http://search.netscape.com>) - search by thematic listings, or by word, search engine is not very good, but there is easy access to other, better, tools.

Yahoo (<http://www.yahoo.com>) - confusing interface with thematic listings and search by word. Not very effective.

General Sites

BBC Online (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>) - Massive information resource! Not always easy to find what you are looking for, and frequently slow due to heavy use, though.

192.com - (<http://www.192.com>) - Electronic "White Pages" telephone directory, allowing a limited number of searches throughout UK after free registration.

Yellow Pages (<http://www.yell.co.uk>) - big, fast and impressive listing of companies and organisations in the UK.

StreetMap (<http://www.streetmap.co.uk>) - get maps of different scales of any part of the UK by postcode or street name.

MultiMap (<http://www.multimap.com>) - online route-planner, giving directions and estimated times of journeys. Also has maps of Europe and the rest of the world.

Scottish Executive (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>) - site includes current press releases and many downloadable documents on a number of topics, including education in Scotland.

Scottish Parliament (<http://www.scottishparliament.uk>) - includes agendas reports and minutes of Parliament and its committees.

UK Online (<http://www.ukonline.gov.uk>) - entry point for UK public sector information on the internet.

General Educational Sites in the UK

Top 5

BECTA (<http://www.becta.org.uk>) - British Educational Technology and Communication Agency whose remit is to ensure that technology supports the drive to raise educational standards, and in particular to provide the professional expertise require to support the future development of the National Grid for Learning.

BBC Learning (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/>) - BBC education site, includes link to Scottish pages, with listings of schools with web pages and other information. They also have an extensive list of other websites, well classified: http://www.bbc.co.uk/plsql/education/webguide/pkg_main.p_home

National Grid for Learning (<http://www.ngfl.org.uk>) - providing national focal point for learning on the Internet.

Scottish Virtual Teachers' Centre (<http://www.svtc.org.uk>) - has lots of resources, including downloadable material, for teachers and librarians in Scottish primary, secondary and special schools and in further education.

Virtual Teachers' Centre (<http://www.vtc.org.uk>) - providing resources and information for teachers in the UK.

Others

Advisory Unit: Computers in Education (<http://www.advisory-unit.org.uk>) - provides support for educational computing for all schools. Software includes Point, Windows Concept and Windows Switch. Free Concept Keyboard Overlay Exchange.

Educate the Children (<http://www.educate.org.uk>) - information and resources for teachers, parents and children, with lesson plans closely linked to the National Curriculum, but few SEN resources.

Education Quest (<http://www.education-quest.com>) - site provided by Questions Publishing, offering access to various articles and news items. Free registration required, with more services for subscribers.

HM Inspectorate of Education (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie>) - information on school inspections in Scotland and policy documents.

ICTeachers (<http://www.icteachers.co.uk>) - lots of information and resources for teachers and parents.

Learning and Teaching, Scotland (<http://www.ltscotland.com>) - formed from the merger of SCET and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum,

MAPE - Micros and Primary Education (<http://www.mape.org.uk>) - aiming to advance education by promoting and developing the awareness and effective use of computers as an integral part of the

philosophy and practice of primary education. Site has some nice free software that can be downloaded.

MAPE Scotland (<http://www.cogus.co.uk/MAPE-Scotland>)- Scottish branch of UK organisation whose main objective is to encourage the effective use of IT across the Primary Curriculum.

New Opportunities Fund (<http://www.nof.org.uk>)- Information on grant programme to fund, fairly and efficiently, health, education, and environment initiatives, across the UK.

Northern Grid for Learning (<http://www.northerngrid.org>) - excellent site with resources prepared by LEAs in the North of England. Lots of downloadable resources.

OFSTED (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>) - Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England.

SchoolsNet (<http://schoolsnet.com>)- site with National Curriculum resources, particularly at KS 3 and 4, but with very little SEN material. Useful discussion groups.

Teachers' Library of Resources (<http://teacherslibrary.org.uk>)- Library of free worksheets and resources available for downloading.

Topmarks (<http://www.topmarks.co.uk>)- Large collection of UK teaching resources, though poor for SEN resources.

Wired for Health (<http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk>) - DfEE / Department of Health website for teachers delivering health information and support for the (English) National Curriculum. Links to excellent resources for children.

General Disability-related Sites

Top 5

Contact a Family (<http://cafamily.org.uk>) - provides advice and support to children with disabilities, whatever the medical condition of the child. Maintains a directory of support groups for parents of children with rare conditions.

Disability Net (<http://www.disabilitynet.co.uk>) - is a service for all disabled people and people with an interest in disability issues.

Family Village (<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu>) - is an excellent site bringing together valuable information for people with disabilities, carers, relatives and professionals.

LDOnline (<http://www.ldonline.org>) - Very useful interactive guide to learning disabilities for parents, teachers and children.

LD Resources (<http://www.ldresources.org>) - the site has a wealth of information and practical resources for people with learning disabilities.

Others

Disability (<http://www.disability.gov.uk>) - information on Government initiatives on disability issues.

Healthworks Online (<http://www.healthworks.co.uk>) - online medical dictionary and journals, including Disability Informer and Assistive Technology Monitor.

National Autistic Society (<http://www.nas.org.uk>) - information about autism and Asperger syndrome, and about support and services available in the UK.

Scope (<http://www.scope.org.uk>) - a major UK charity campaigning on behalf of people with cerebral palsy.

General SEN Sites

Top 5

Low Incidence Unit, Queensland, Australia (<http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/liu>) - excellent site with lots of useful ideas on the use of technology to help children with special needs in education. Downloadable resources for many programs, including BoardMaker, Clicker, Powerpoint, Intellikeys.

CALL Centre (<http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk>) - provides specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties, in

schools across Scotland. Downloadable resources.

PAEC - Planet Discovery (<http://www.paec.org/planetdiscovery>) - US site with lots of downloadable resources.

SET -BC (Special Education Technology - British Columbia) (<http://www.setbc.org>) - is a resource site designed for school districts in BC, but with resources that will be of benefit to many others. Includes notes from video-conference instruction courses and downloadable BoardMaker files.

Snow: Special Needs Opportunity Window (<http://snow.utoronto.ca/index.html>) - is a Canadian educational site with information on professional development, curriculum, best practices, etc.. Lots of downloadable resources.

Others

British Dyslexia Association (<http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk>) - National organisation for specific learning difficulties, with general information on dyslexia and lists of publications and resources.

DfES SEN Site (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen>) - primarily applicable to England and Wales, but useful information on policies, projects and resources.

I am Dyslexic (<http://www.iamdyslexic.com>) - excellent site set up by teenage boy who is dyslexic.

Inclusion (<http://inclusion.ngfl.org.uk>) - is a free, searchable catalogue of on-line resources that support teaching professionals, parents and carers in meeting individual learning needs. Currently suffers from lack of resources and poor user interface.

NASEN (<http://www.nasen.org.uk>) - National Association for Special Educational Needs. Site includes abstracts of journal articles, responses to consultations, details of publications, database of SEN research in the UK.

NCIP National Centre to Improve Practice in Special Education through Technology, Media and Materials (<http://www2.edc.org/NCIP>) - excellent US site, with downloadable materials. Site no longer maintained, but still useful.

OVEC Ride Project (<http://www.ovec.org/ride/Home/index.htm>) - US demonstration project looking at resources for early education for children with disabilities.

Preschool Education Program - Teacher Created Resources

(<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/pep/teachercreate.html>) - useful collection of BoardMaker files and other resources.

Project LITT - Literacy Instruction through Technology

(<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/SPED/ProjectLITT/LITT>) - US site with detailed comparisons of "talking book" programs.

Project Participate (<http://www.projectparticipate.org>) - US site which provides families, educators, administrators and therapists with simple strategies to increase the active participation of students with disabilities in school programs. Lots of downloadable resources.

SERI - Special Education Resources on the Internet (<http://seriweb.com>) - has a major list of Web resources, covering a wide range of disability and education-related topics.

Special Needs Explanatory (<http://education-resources.cant.ac.uk/Xplanatory>) - Special Needs Research & Development Centre, Canterbury Christ Church College of Higher Education - useful directory of information and resources.

Technology Integration (<http://www.Lburkhart.com>) is a very useful site with information on resources produced by Linda Burkhart, aimed particularly at using technology as a tool for education and communication.

Computer Access

AbilityNet (<http://www.abilitynet.co.uk/>) - National UK charity providing impartial, expert advice about computer technology for disabled people. Lots of excellent downloadable

information sheets.

Adaptive Computing Software Project

(<http://www.geocities.com/Hotsprings/villa/6113/index.html>) - source for disability-related shareware and public domain software for the PC, with useful information on accessing computers.

Alliance for Technology Access (<http://www.ataccess.org/>) - Network of people using technology to work with children and adults with disabilities. Lots of nice resources.

Apple Disability Resources (<http://www.apple.com/education/k12/disability>) - description of features designed to make Apple computers more accessible for disabled people. Site includes downloadable utilities.

Center on Disabilities, California State University, Northridge (<http://www.csun.edu/cod>) - provides information on the 'Technology for People with Disabilities' Conference and proceedings of other conferences related to assistive technology.

Closing the Gap (<http://www.closingthegap.com>) - web site provided by the excellent journal on assistive technology, with information on their major conference, articles from the journal and other information.

EASI (<http://www.rit.edu/~easi>) - Equal Access to Software and Information is a service dedicated to disseminating up-to-date information about access to computing and information technology for persons with disabilities. K - 12 Center has lengthy list of web sites specifically designed for kids.

IBM Accessibility Centre (<http://www.austin.ibmcom/sns/index.html>) - has information on software and technology to allow access to computers for people with disabilities.

IT Can Help (ITCH) (<http://www.itcanhelp.org.uk>) - network of computer professionals who can assist people with disabilities who have computer difficulties on a voluntary basis.

Missouri Technology Center for Special Education (<http://techctr.educ.umkc.edu>) - Assistive Technology Resource page includes free software archives.

The Mouse List (<http://www.setbc.org/mouselist>) - Diana Carroll's guide to mice and alternative pointing devices, now hosted by SETBC.

Productivity Works (<http://www.prodworks.com>) - are the developers of pwWebSpeak, providing speech output from web pages and other useful Internet access equipment.

Trace Center, University of Wisconsin (<http://trace.wisc.edu>) - addresses the communication needs of people who are non-speaking and who have severe disabilities. Lots of information about AAC software, hardware and guidelines. Downloadable access utilities.

WebAble (<http://www.webable.com>) - US site whose mission is to make the Internet and World Wide Web accessible to people with disabilities. Excellent on-line library.

Visual Impairment Resources

Betsie Home Page (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/betsie>) - Text-only version of BBC web site.

Games for the Blind (<http://www.gamesfortheblind.com>) is a commercial site but interesting because the games are developed by a blind coder (this is a real rarity), and they are not expensive.

MET Group (<http://met.open.ac.uk>) - Open University's Multimedia Enabling Technologies Group. Lots of technical resources for special needs.

New York Institute for Special Education. (<http://www.nyise.org>) - Despite the name, this site focuses mostly on visual impairment and is one of the best specialist list sites around. Massive collection of links to other VI Resources.

National Library for the Blind (UK) (<http://www.nlbuk.org>) - has a very good website, including a section for teenagers called the Fiction Cafe

Resources for Parents and Teachers of Blind Kids

(<http://members.home.net/ddays/blindkids.html>) - a USA site but comprehensive and easy

to use.

RNIB (<http://www.rnib.org.uk>) - Royal National Institute for the Blind is a major charity campaigning for a world in which people with a visual impairment enjoy the same rights, freedoms, responsibilities and quality of life as people who are fully sighted. Lots of useful information!

RNIB Curriculum Clipboard (<http://www.rnib.org.uk/curriculum>) - Resources, news, bulletin boards for teachers of VI, including links to other useful non-RNIB curriculum websites.

Scottish Sensory Centre (<http://www.ssc.mhie.ac.uk/>) (SSC) - promotes and supports new developments and effective practices in the education of children and young people with sensory impairments.

Sort It (<http://sortit.org.uk>) - RNIB sponsored site for VI 11-16 year-olds

The Student Website (<http://rnib.org.uk/student/welcome.htm>) - RNIB site for students with a visual impairment.

VIScotland (<http://www.viscotland.org.uk/>) aims to help children and parents whose children are visually impaired by making sure that we can give them as much up-to-date information regarding their child's eye condition, as possible.

Hearing Impairment Resources

BATOD (<http://www.batod.org.uk>) - British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

Deaf@x Trust (<http://www.webcom.com/deafax>) - information on access technology for deaf people.

DeafClub (<http://www.deafclub.co.uk>) - General UK deaf links.

DeafClub Games (<http://www.deafclub.co.uk/games>) - simple on-line games.

DeafLinks (<http://www.deafmall.net/deaflinx/>) - gigantic list of deaf resources around the world

International Bibliography of Sign Language (<http://www.sign-lang.uni-hamburg.de/BibWeb>) - bibliography of sign language from Hamburg University.

NDCS (<http://www.ndcs.org.uk>) - National Deaf Children's Society - lots of information and links for parents.

RAD - Royal Association for Deaf People (<http://www.royaldeaf.org.uk>) - Education Directory: mostly communication (BSL and lipreading) links to other useful non-RNID curriculum websites.

RNID (<http://www.rnid.org.uk/>) - Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People - some useful stuff.

Communication Resources

AAC Intervention (<http://www.aacintervention.com>) - Site set up by Julie Maro and Caroline Musselwhite with many useful resources.

AAC Research Unit, University of Stirling (<http://www.aacscotland.com>) - Details of projects carried out by the unit, including Talking Mats and training packages.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication Centres (<http://aac.unl.edu/>) is a major augmentative communication site maintained by the University of Nebraska, Lincoln with many useful resources, including guides to terminology, vocabularies, demographic information.

Augmentative Communication On-Line Users Group (ACOLUG)

(http://www.temple.edu/inst_disabilities/ACOLG/tacolug.html) - ACOLUG is a LISTSERV created to exchange ideas, information and experiences on augmentative communication by people from all over the world. By using e-mail, people who use augmentative communication and their friends and families discuss issues related to augmentative communication, such as equipment, funding, learning techniques and supports.

Beyond Autism (<http://trainland.tripod.com>) - Excellent site set up by parent of child with

autism, with lots of resources, including articles, PECS materials and games.

Blissymbolics Communication International (<http://home.istar.ca/~bci/>) - is a major site with information on the Bliss symbol system.

Communication Matters (<http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk>) - is the UK chapter of ISAAC. Communication Matters publishes journals and books on AAC, organises Study Days, and holds an annual conference. The site has an on-line membership, order form and a chat forum.

Creative Communications (<http://www.creative-comm.com>) - Useful site set up by Pati King-DeBaun, with particular emphasis on emergent literacy activities.

Do2Learn (<http://www.dotolearn.com>) - Site has a particular focus on autism and learning disabilities, with many useful resources.

ISAAC (www.isaac-online.org)- International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication is a worldwide organisation concerned with AAC. It has a number of chapters in different countries - Communication Matters is the UK Chapter. The site has information about the organisation, publications, events, resources and an on-line forum.

Makaton Vocabulary Development Project (<http://www.makaton.org>) Information on Makaton language programme utilising symbols and signs.

Signalong (<http://www.signalong.org.uk/>) is a charity working to empower people with learning disabilities and autism to take control of their lives through improved communication skills. It has developed a key-word sign-supporting system adapted from British Sign Language.

Simplified Technology (<http://www.lburkhart.com>) - Linda Burkhart's site with general information and downloadable handouts on augmentative communication.

Speaking of Speech (<http://www.speakingofspeech.com/>) is an interactive forum for speech/language pathologists and teachers to improve communication skills in our schools by exchanging ideas, techniques, and lessons.

YAACK (AAC connecting Young Kids) (<http://www.mrtc.org/duffy/yaack/>) Introduction to augmentative communication with a number of useful links.

Fun Stuff

Centre for the Easily Amused (<http://www.amused.com>) - one visit and you'll never be the same.

Children's Software Revue (<http://www2.childrensoftware.com/>) reviews of over 4,000 programs aimed at children.

Dancing Hamsters (<http://www.hamsterdance.com/>) - self-explanatory!

Disney (<http://disney.go.com>) - online activities, games and downloadable video clips.

FunBrain (<http://www.funbrain.com/>) - part of the Learning Network, American site with lots of games.

KidsCom (<http://www.kidscom.com>) - loads of games and activities to keep children busy!

Kids' Domain (<http://www.kidsdomain.org>) has lots of high-quality public domain Mac and PC software for children available for downloading. Site also has reviews and demo copies of commercial software.

Kids Domain UK (<http://www.kidsdomain.co.uk>) - UK site with UK-oriented resources, but fewer downloadable materials than US site.

Kids Space (<http://www.kids-space.org>) - Japanese English-language site with lots of activities encouraging children from different countries to participate in activities together.

MegaScene Virtual Community (<http://megascene.ukonline.co.uk/>) - The hottest virtual community for the under-18s with games, jokes, gossip, stories.

News 4 You (<http://www.news-4-you.com>) - US-based on-line symbol-based weekly newspaper for kids.

Sesame Street (<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/>)- lovely site with lots of games and activities.

Word Play (<http://www.wolinskyweb.com/word.htm>) - all about words - funny, erudite, barely comprehensible.

Schools

Hundreds of schools now have their own sites - see BBC Online - Education for a list. Here are a few that are particularly relevant to pupils with special educational needs that are worth a look.

Ambleside Primary School

(http://ambleweb.digitalbrain.com/ambleweb/web/home.db_psc) - lots of literacy and numeracy resources developed by staff and pupils at the school.

Richmond Park School (<http://www.btinternet.com/~richmond.park/index.html>) Award winning site set up by Glasgow school for children with disabilities.

Highfurlong School (<http://www.highfurlong-school.co.uk>) includes details of approaches and curricular activities used with children with communication difficulties.

Meldreth Manor School (<http://members.tripod.com/MMSCHOOL2/>) Excellent site set up by residential school for children with cerebral palsy.

Making International Contacts

Key to KeyPal Success (http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr125.shtml) - article describing benefits and pitfalls of international classroom penpals schemes.

Chatback (<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/chatback/>) - aims to provide email links for mainly special schools in a variety of countries.

ePals Classroom Exchange (<http://www.epals.com/>) - world's largest online classroom community, with over 4.5 million students and teachers in 191 countries.

KidLink (<http://www.kidlink.org/>) - Norwegian-based site providing opportunities for links between secondary-age pupils throughout the world. Very child-friendly.

Windows on the World (<http://www.wotw.org.uk/>)- provides database for schools looking for partner schools for projects throughout the world.

Equipment Suppliers

Academic Software Inc (<http://www.acsw.com/>) - are suppliers of a number of assistive technology products, including the excellent Handbook of Adaptive Switches and AugCom Devices. On-line experimental assistive device locator tool now available.

Apple Education (<http://www.apple.com/uk/education/index.html>) agent for Apple educational computers and software.

AVP Educational (<http://www.avp.co.uk/>) software suppliers with facility for on-line purchasing.

RJ Cooper's site (<http://www.rjcooper.com>) describes some of his products and software for people with special needs. Includes downloadable software.

Crick Software (<http://www.cricksoft.com/uk/>) are the designers of Clicker and other software for people with disabilities. Site includes downloadable Clicker Grids.

Dolphin Computer Access Ltd (<http://www.dolphinuk.co.uk/>) Suppliers of equipment to provide access for visually impaired computer users. Includes free downloadable demonstration programs.

DreamWriter Solutions (<http://www.dreamwriter.co.uk/>) - UK suppliers of Dreamwriter portable writing aids.

Edmark (<http://www.riverdeep.net/edmark/>) are suppliers of award-winning educational software. Software can be tried 'on-line' or downloaded.

iANSYST Systems (<http://www.dyslexic.com>) - a commercial site with very balanced information about a wide range of products designed to help people with specific learning difficulties / dyslexia.

Inclusive Technology (<http://www.inclusive.co.uk/>) - is a major supplier of software and equipment for people with special educational needs. Site also has useful background information.

Intellitools Inc (<http://www.intellitools.com>) - Manufacturer of Intellikeys keyboard and accompanying software. Site also has large "Activity Exchange" of free, downloadable resources for use with Intellikeys.

Don Johnston Inc. (<http://www.donjohnston.com>) - develops and supplies software and equipment for learning disabilities, communication and access to computers.

Keytools (<http://www.keytools.com>) - are suppliers of a wide range of alternative keyboards, mice, etc., access software. Includes downloadable demos.

Laureate Learning Systems (<http://www.LLSys.com>) - are the creators of a wide range of software for people with special needs.

Logotron (<http://www.logo.com>) - Suppliers of educational software. Demonstration copies of programs available.

Mayer-Johnson Inc (<http://www.mayerjohnson.com>) is the originator of Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) and supplies a range of software, symbol products and instructional material. Lots of downloadable resources.

Oxford University Press (<http://www.oup.co.uk/oxed/primary/>) - site includes access to online resources for the Oxford Reading Tree.

Prentke Romich Company (<http://www.prentrom.com>) - manufactures communication aids, such as the DeltaTalker, and other assistive devices.

REM (<http://www.r-e-m.co.uk>) - Supplier of educational software.

RM (<http://www.rm.com>) - Supplier of software, services and systems to UK education. Large number of additional resources available on the site.

SEMERC (http://www.granadalearning.com/special_needs) providers of software, hardware and information for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream education and at home.

Sensory Software (<http://www.sensorysoftware.com>) - developer and supplier of range of communication-related software and other products. Downloadable demo versions of software.

Sherston (<http://www2.sherston.com>) - is a major supplier of educational software.

Sight and Sound Technology (<http://www.sightandsound.co.uk>) - providing computer solutions for people with visual impairments.

Switch in Time (<http://www.switchintime.com>) - site with commercial and free downloadable Macintosh software for switch users.

TAG Developments Ltd (<http://www.taglearning.com>) - Supplier of educational software and equipment, with downloadable demos of programs.

Widgit Software (<http://www.widgit.com>) - supplies and develops Rebus and other symbol software, with lots of useful information on its application. Lots of downloadable demos and resources.

Words Worldwide Ltd (formerly Aptech Ltd) (<http://www.keyspell.com>) - supplies a range of products to support people with dyslexia, visual and physical disabilities, including voice recognition systems, Keystone screenreader and Keyspell spellchecker.

Xavier Software (University of Bangor) (<http://xavier.bangor.ac.uk/Xavier>) - has software designed to help children with dyslexia.

Email

Email is a very powerful communication tool, allowing more or less instant communication across the world. If you need to contact somebody in Australia there's no longer any need to worry about time zones - the recipient will collect it at their leisure. Email is particularly liberating for people with disabilities who have access to a computer at home or in school. They can communicate freely with other people without the recipient "seeing the disability". There are various schemes which allow children to contact people in other schools throughout the world. A list of some of these can be found at:

<http://kidspenpals.about.com/kids/kidspenpals/msubschools.htm>

If you don't know the email address of a person there are email directories that you can such as **White Pages: Email** (http://form.netscape.com/peoplesearch/email_srch.html) and **WhoWhere?** (<http://www.whowhere.lycos.com/>). Although these directories contain many millions of email addresses, there is every chance that the person you are looking for is not in the directory - many people prefer not to be included in order to try to avoid getting "junk" email.

Newsgroups

Most Internet Service Providers allow access to Usenet newsgroups - "free for all" discussion groups to which anyone can post a message to initiate a discussion on a topic. The newsgroups are topic related and can be a useful source of information. The lack of any regulation - some people post unsuitable material to all newsgroups - mean that the newsgroups should be treated with extreme caution and are certainly not suitable for use by pupils within schools.

There are a number of "closed" discussion areas - most are relatively easy to join, by simply sending an email message to the host. A number of groups related to special education can be found on the BECTA website at <http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/discussion/index.html>. Here are some of the SEN Discussion Areas currently supported by BECTA:

bilingual-assistants - a place where bilingual assistants of all language groups can share good practice and new initiatives with respect to their professional practice in schools and local communities

community-languages - for those interested in what's going on in the world of Community Languages and ICT, from fonts for Urdu to sharing ideas for authentic language web sites

distance-learning - for those wishing to share good practice and information in developing distance learning for pupils not in school

eal-bilingual - for teachers of English as an additional language, specialist classroom assistants, and others involved in teaching pupils from ethnic and linguistic minorities

easyspeak - for exchanging ideas about the education of children and young people with language and communication difficulties

EBD-Forum - a forum for discussing issues relating to the education of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties

esol-group - for those involved in teaching English as a second language

Dyslexia-wales - for teachers, support staff, educational professionals and others with an interest in dyslexia issues in Wales

fforwm-aaa - a discussion group relating to SEN issues in Wales which welcomes contributions in the Welsh language

High-Ability - a forum for discussing issues relating to the education of able children

index-inclusion - a forum for users of Index for Inclusion materials - including schools, education authorities and researchers - to make comments about the Index and to ask questions about its use in schools, to provide answers and share information

nurture-groups - a list for practitioners with an interest in nurture groups, such as teachers, school staff, educational psychologists, LEA officers and university tutors

pd-net - for professionals involved in the education of children with physical and neurological disabilities and complex medical needs

PRU-talk - a mailing list for members of staff within a maintained Pupil Referral Unit of Pupil Referral Units (PRU). It is a closed list for the exchange of views, information and advice

Respect4all - a UK-based discussion forum aimed at teachers, support staff and other educational professionals, and it supports the development of practice and resources reflecting cultural diversity within our society and engendering respect for all through the National Curriculum

SCENT- for professionals involved in the delivery of education to learners with medical conditions

senco-forum - for discussing issues relating to SENCOs' work

Senco-forum-digest - for special needs co-ordinators, those in local authority services, and others involved in supporting pupils with special educational needs.

SENIT - for those with a particular interest in finding out about IT solutions to support pupils

SLD-forum - for professionals involved in the education of learners with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties

Speech recognition - for those who wish to share practical advice about the use and potential for speech recognition in educational settings

ToD - for Teachers of the Deaf and associated professionals involved in teaching deaf learners in schools

trav-ed - for practitioners with an interest in Traveller education

VI-Forum - for those with an interest in teaching students with visual impairments