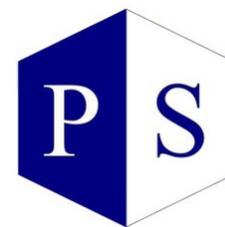


## How onscreen assessment is helping Polygon School meet the complex needs of its students



We talk to their exam officer and subject teacher about their onscreen assessment experience

**Polygon School, Southampton is an inner city Special Educational Needs day school for secondary boys. The students who attend the school have a mixture of social emotional mental health needs, ADHD and Autism, and are there permanently for their secondary education, it's not a short-term placement for the boys.**

All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and an individual behaviour plan. Exams can be a stressful time for their pupils, and some will become dysregulated and are unable to manage their emotions.

Chris Morley, Year 11 Tutor and the Exams Officer at the school, and Hayley Ifould, an English teacher, share their onscreen assessment experience below.



### Why Polygon School chose onscreen assessment

Even though students at the Polygon School are entitled to have access arrangements for exams, particularly a scribe, the school are seeing more pupils that have a barrier to exams, a barrier to being able to talk to a scribe and for them to write it down on paper such as being able to talk to their scribe or being able to clearly hand write their answers.

But despite these barriers, they had students who were strong at typing and keen to independently sit their exams, so onscreen assessment seemed like a great way forward.



### Student engagement and outcomes

Given the profile of Polygon's students, it's important that the students are given the choice of how to take their exams, and that onscreen assessment is not forced upon them, but at the same time managing expectations for those students that it might not be suitable for. Polygon are monitoring how well students engage with onscreen assessment and their results will be a key indicator of this, but more importantly, student's attitude and behaviour in the exam determines the true success of onscreen assessment.

The school are noticing a trend that getting students to pick up a pen and be able to develop their ideas and write for periods of time is becoming increasingly difficult.

### Running both onscreen and paper-based assessment

To accommodate all the different access arrangements, the school had students sitting onscreen exams in two classrooms and the remaining paper-based exams running in other classrooms with the scribes. The school do multiple entries with Year 10's and 11's including running a November series, so the students get used to sitting an exam and are familiar with a staggered start to their exam; this approach allows them to start each room off individually.

“ **Onscreen assessment allows students with barriers to paper-based exams take the exam independently.** ”

## Managing the technical delivery of onscreen assessment

Before exam day, the school pre-empted as many situations as they could and had solutions and contingencies in place, for example, they purposely chose to use desktop computers over laptops so students couldn't shut the laptop lids down during the exam.

The school had a technical problem first thing where they were unable to log onto the platform. The Support Team at Pearson Edexcel were straight onto it and helped resolve the problem quickly and they experienced a 5-minute delay to the start of the exam.

Polygon say that they don't have the best technology or WiFi connection so a couple of the students did experience some lagging of their computer screens, but this was not enough to distract them from continuing with the exam.

During the exam, one student turned off the computer at the wall during the exam after they received a message saying they were working offline - they thought their work had been lost when in reality their work was still being saved locally. Pearson Edexcel helped to recover the work that had been completed to the point the computer was turned off. Although the student could have continued, they were struggling with their emotions and were unable to go back and complete the rest of the exam.

## Practice for onscreen assessment

Although whole exam papers are available for onscreen assessment practice, Polygon have found that lots of practice questions in the classroom is a more accessible option for their students.

“*The Support Team at Pearson Edexcel were straight onto it and helped resolve the problem quickly.*”

## Polygon's top tips for those starting out on an onscreen assessment journey

Polygon and their students have unique needs but their top tips are:

### **Mock exam**

Definitely run an onscreen mock exam so the students and the invigilators can familiarise themselves with the platform and technology. Make sure they are clear with the platform and the settings, remind them that once 'submit' is pressed that the exam has been submitted and cannot be accessed after, so they need to double check their work before pressing the button.

### **Typing speed**

Make sure your students can type and they have a good typing speed otherwise that can be a barrier to them in their exam if you are using onscreen assessment.

Onscreen assessment is good to meet students where they are most comfortable in developing their ideas. Within the platform, students know they can scroll back through questions if they need to and revisit them, they like the functionality of the platform and look forward to continuing their journey.

