Case Study:
An Exciting New Technology Arrives In Schools

Image: Beacon Hill School

PROJECT BACKGROUND (Edited)

As a Local Authority, we decided in 2014 to investigate what eye-gaze had to offer the range of students in our schools.

Two lines of study were identified and the first was located at Beacon Hill School, which caters for students from 2 - 19 with SLD and PMLD. Anabel Drought, the ICT coordinator was identified to work collaboratively with me, Carol Allen, the School Improvement Advisor for ICT and Inclusion on this project. In collaboration with the Speech Therapists, a group of five students were identified to participate in the study.

About **Beacon Hill School**:
Beacon Hill School is a school for young people with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties aged two to nineteen. It is also a Specialist College for Business and Enterprise and relish the additional opportunity this provides for our young people in relation to developing their enterprise skills and awareness of the world of work.

WHY EYE GAZE NOW? (Edited)

In North Tyneside, we constantly strive to explore and exploit technology as it becomes available for the benefit of our students, their families and the educators who work with them in school.

We held off from early eye-gaze work partly due to cost of the early set-ups and partly because we wanted to see what others did, experienced and deducted in order that our work would have focus and clear direction. Combined with this, we were also waiting for software that really fitted the needs of our complex students.

(Image: myGaze Assistive eye tracker)

WHAT DID WE THINK OF MYGAZE?

We have been incredibly heartened by the initial results of this study. Already the first series of trials proved that this is an access method that we wished to explore further.

Set up: *Set up was incredibly easy, as is using it*; we have not needed to read any instructions which is always good.

Positioning guide: Colour and measurements indicators for height and distance are very easy to use to establish the position of monitor.
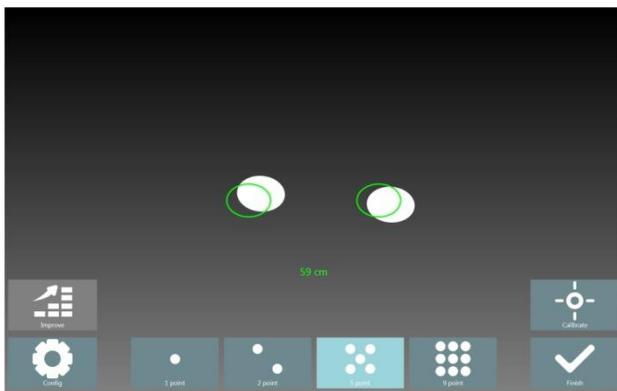
(Image: Positioning guide of myGaze EyeMouse Play)

Calibration: *The 0- and 1-point calibration is highly helpful for many students to get started.* In fact we have never got beyond 2 point calibration as the students we are working with take a long time to find the first point and often don't realise it's moved.
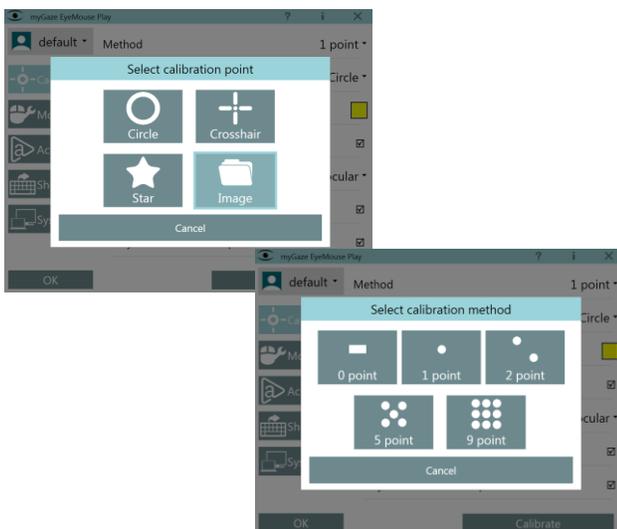
(Image: Calibration options of myGaze EyeMouse Play)

Accuracy: We found that so long as the distance and height are correct - on screen calibration is pretty accurate. *Accuracy is fantastic when used with students who are able to calibrate.*

Visual clues: We really like the red dot which appears intermittently on screen to show where the child's eyes are pointing, it really helps when you think they're looking at the object and it's not being activated and you panic that the calibration is off.

We were very happy to work with this particular

(Images: myGaze and Attention & Looking)

combination of *Eye Tracker* and *Eye Mouse* as **the price was affordable for us and the software accessible and appropriate for the students** we wished to work with.

The award winning [*EyeGaze Foundations*](link) bundle, combining the myGaze system and the "Attention and Looking" software, gave us exactly what we had been waiting for to start as it has clear graphics, simple set up, and the activities are easily linked to the areas we wish to focus on.

A VALUABLE TOOL FOR PUPILS AND EDUCATORS

We have been able to see students who have no form of communication or useful controlled hand and arm movements being able to activate objects on screen with myGaze. Because of its ease of use, this tool provides them the possibility to start with

eye gaze early and build their communication skills for whatever their individual capacities may be.

This equipment is also a vital tool for educators working with pupils with additional needs. It allows a greater insight into various aspects of their awareness and responses. This is immensely useful as it provides information to them at appropriate size, parts of the screen and speed.

A MOMENT OF TRUE JOY FOR EVERY EDUCATOR

We were working with a little girl called Sally who has a degenerative condition. Sally very quickly understood she was activating the programme with her eyes and this was apparent through very obvious eye movements - widening and blinking when she found the object so she could pop it.

(Image: Sally using myGaze in a classroom with Carol)

"I can't describe the feeling we all had when we realised she could do it, it was one of those goose bump moments, we all felt it at the same time!"

By Carol Allen and Anabel Drought, December 2014

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Carol Allen is the School Improvement Advisor for ICT and SEN in North Tyneside LA. She has taught since 1980 in both mainstream and schools for students with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently looking at the impact of mobile technologies on inclusive practice, Carol shares achievable and practical strategies and technology to ensure teachers can extend and enhance learning opportunities for all young people.

Anabel Drought is working at Beacon Hill School for children with severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities and autism. Anabel specializes in using technology as an access and communication tool for children with a special educational need.

Visual Interaction (VI) has taken on the mission to provide easy to use and affordable gaze tracking and gaze based interaction solutions for broad professional, educational and consumer audiences and developers. VI collaborates with leaders around the world to create best in class solutions.

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