

Skills at their fingertips

Karen Mitchell from Shrewsbury School is keen to get all pupils touch typing, says Sal McKeown



Shrewsbury School uses a number of products to help pupils become proficient typists

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People often think of touch typing as an old fashioned skill, but it is making a comeback in many independent schools. An **article** in the Daily Mail in 2017 claimed that the ability to touch type at speed had become an essential asset in the jobs market and that it had been added to the curriculum at Brighton College and Eton in response to parental pressure. Now Shrewsbury School has joined the ranks of schools encouraging young people 'to type properly'.

The school has a strong academic base but is also known for sports – some of their students have represented the UK at rowing – as well as music and drama. Like many independent schools, it accepts students with specific learning difficulties, dyspraxia and motor coordination issues. While Shrewsbury is not a specialist school, it has a reputation for being supportive and able to cater for different needs.

Karen Mitchell joined Shrewsbury School eight years ago and is now in her second year as head of learning support.

She says: "I learnt to touch type at college. It is such a valuable skill and helped me both at university and in my career. I have to type lengthy assessments and reports and being able to touch type has been a great asset."

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In the first few weeks of the academic year, Mitchell and her colleagues assess all new pupils entering year 9, year 10 and the sixth form. Some have such poor handwriting that teachers have great difficulty reading their work but, even more importantly, pupils cannot easily revise from their own notes.

"We really push them to improve their handwriting," says Mitchell. "We encourage them to go to handwriting club and we make sure they get plenty of practice."

It works for some but not others. For those who have major difficulties with writing and need to type, the school uses a number of products including the KAZ program, which helps pupils become proficient typists. KAZ offers a SEN/dyslexia edition, developed with advice and guidance from the **Dyslexia Research Trust**.

Academic standards are high at Shrewsbury School and many pupils apply to Oxford and Cambridge every year. Other popular university destinations include Leeds, Manchester, Bristol, Durham, Edinburgh and Newcastle.

Research by Pitman Training shows that people who type with two fingers manage between 27 and 37 words a minute, while someone trained to touch type can reach between 50 and 70 words a minute. These days, university students will often be required to produce 2,000 word essays and dissertations of 10,000 words or more. These have to be typed up so those with good touch typing skills will save themselves many hours of work.

It seems that pupils at Shrewsbury School can see the benefits.

"Currently, we offer touch typing as one of the activities in our co-curricular societies programme, and it has been well received," said Mitchell. "It is encouraging to see that many of them can now touch type much faster than me!"

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Give YOUR students a head start - teach them to type.

<https://kaz-type.com>