👨‍👩‍👧‍👦 Chromebook Accessibility: A Staff/Parent's Guide

Chromebooks come with many helpful tools built right in, designed to make learning easier and more accessible for every child. Think of them as extra supports that can be turned on to match your child's unique needs. In East Lothian we believe these tools are necessary for some, but useful for all.

Here's a quick look at these features and how they can support your child:

👀 For Seeing and Reading Better

ChromeVox (Screen Reader):

- **What it does:** This tool reads *everything* on the screen aloud – text, buttons, menus, and even describes images. It's like having a narrator for the entire computer.
- **How it helps:** Essential for children who are blind or have very low vision. It allows them to navigate and interact with the computer independently.

Select-to-Speak:

- **What it does:** Instead of reading everything, your child can highlight just the text they want to hear, and the Chromebook will read it aloud, often highlighting the words as they are spoken.
- **How it helps:** Great for children who struggle with reading, have dyslexia, or get easily overwhelmed by too much text. It helps them focus on specific sentences or paragraphs without reading the whole page.

Magnification Tools (Full-Screen & Docked):

- **What it does: Full-Screen Magnifier** makes the whole screen bigger, like looking through a magnifying glass. **Docked Magnifier** creates a magnified strip at the top of the screen while keeping the rest normal.
- **How it helps:** For children with low vision, this helps them see smaller text, images, or details more clearly. The docked option is useful for keeping context while focusing on a small area.

Color & Contrast Options (Inversion, Filters, Dark Mode):

- **What it does:** These settings change the colors on the screen. **Color Inversion** (high contrast) flips light colors to dark and vice-versa. **Color Filters** can adjust the screen's color tint. **Dark Mode** makes backgrounds dark and text light.
- **How it helps:** Can reduce eye strain, especially for children sensitive to bright lights. It's also helpful for those with certain color perception differences, making text and images easier to distinguish.

Large Mouse Cursor & Cursor Highlighting:

- **What it does:** Makes the arrow you move with the mouse bigger and can add a glowing ring around it or the text cursor (where you're typing).
- **How it helps:** Helps children who struggle to find or track the cursor on the screen, improving their ability to point, click, and type accurately.

NEW! Reading Mode:

- **What it does:** This feature takes articles or webpages and strips away all the distracting elements like ads, sidebars, and extra buttons. It presents the main text in a clean, simple view, often allowing you to customize the font, text size, line spacing, and even the background color.
- **How it helps:** It's incredibly beneficial for children who get easily overwhelmed by busy webpages, have difficulty focusing on the main text, or find too much visual clutter distracting (e.g., children with ADHD, dyslexia, or certain visual processing differences). It creates a calm, focused reading environment, helping them concentrate purely on the content they need to learn.

✋ For Easier Typing and Control

Dictation (Voice Typing):

- **What it does:** Your child can speak, and the Chromebook will type out their words into any text box.
- **How it helps:** Ideal for children who have difficulty with typing, spelling, or getting their ideas down quickly. It lets them focus on their thoughts rather than the mechanics of writing.

Automatic Clicks:

- **What it does:** When the mouse cursor stops moving for a moment, the Chromebook automatically "clicks" for you.
- **How it helps:** Useful for children who can move the mouse around but find it hard to press the click buttons due to motor skill challenges.

Sticky Keys:

- **What it does:** Allows your child to press keys for shortcuts (like `Ctrl` + `C` to copy) one after another, instead of having to hold them all down at the same time.
- **How it helps:** Great for children who have difficulty with fine motor skills or using multiple fingers at once for keyboard shortcuts.

On-Screen Keyboard:

- **What it does:** Displays a virtual keyboard right on the screen that your child can "type" on using their mouse, touchscreen, or a different pointing device.
- **How it helps:** Beneficial for children who cannot use a physical keyboard or prefer to type by pointing and clicking.

Face Control:

- **What it does:** Uses the camera to track head movements and facial gestures to move the cursor and perform actions, offering a completely hands-free way to control the computer.
- **How it helps:** This is a powerful tool for children with significant physical disabilities who cannot use their hands or traditional input devices.

👂 For Hearing and Focus

Live Caption:

- **What it does:** Automatically generates real-time captions for videos, audio clips, podcasts, and even live calls playing on the Chromebook.
- **How it helps:** Fantastic for children who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those who benefit from seeing text alongside audio for comprehension, especially when learning new vocabulary.

Mono Audio:

- **What it does:** Combines all the sounds into a single stream, so if there's audio that's typically split between left and right speakers, your child will hear all of it in both ears.
- **How it helps:** Ensures children with hearing loss in one ear don't miss any part of the audio content from videos or lessons.

Focus Mode:

- **What it does:** Helps minimize distractions by pausing notifications and limiting access to certain apps, helping your child concentrate on one task.
- **How it helps:** Very useful for children who struggle with attention, ADHD, or easily get sidetracked during study time.