



“Accessibility isn’t one need – it’s hundreds, all in one classroom”

St Paul’s Catholic School in Milton Keynes serves a diverse student community, including a large number of students with special educational needs and disabilities and many who speak English as an additional language. For joint Head of Department Megan Martin, that makes accessible assessment essential to ensuring every student can succeed.



Accessibility is about practical, real-world application and understanding other people's needs. Megan teaches Cambridge OCR Design and Technology, and for her it means ensuring every student can access both the qualification and the assessment, whether that's the exam or non-exam assessment.



Flexibility that supports every student

“What Cambridge OCR does really well is choose contexts that are accessible for any young person.”

Flexibility is key to how Megan and her team make assessments work for their Cambridge OCR GCSE Design and Technology students.

“The qualification has enough flexibility in it so that we can adapt it to our learners’ needs,” she explains. “There are lots of resources to support that, from exemplar materials to CPD training.”

A big part of that comes from how Cambridge OCR structures its assessment contexts.

“What Cambridge OCR does really well is choose contexts that are accessible for any young person,” she says. **“Students understand the problem straight away, and there’s enough scope to take different angles to suit their needs.”**

This flexibility also helps challenge stereotypes and widen participation.

“For example, in fashion and textiles, we can adapt contexts to reflect different interests – like sport – so it resonates with students who might not traditionally engage with the subject.”



Helping teachers support student success

Accessibility isn't only about students. Megan believes teachers also need clear, straightforward information that helps them support students effectively.

"The way the marking criteria are delivered means I can share them with students," she explains. "The language isn't overly complicated, so they understand how they're being assessed."

That transparency gives students a clearer sense of what success looks like.

"It gives them insight into what they need to do to maximise their marks," she says.

Easy to use resources makes a difference too.

"All of the online materials are easy to find and easy to navigate. When you're under time pressure, that clarity and ease of access counts for a lot."

That efficiency benefits students directly.

"If teachers can access resources easily, it means we can use them more effectively, and students benefit from that straight away."



Supporting students with diverse needs

Megan shares a powerful example from her own classroom.

"I had a student with additional needs who really wanted to do fashion and textiles GCSE," she says. "We agreed she could do it, and we structured the course by breaking it down into smaller, manageable chunks."



The structure of the qualification made that possible.

"I was able to give her a little bit at a time. One task, then the next. It became a gradual build-up of her work, rather than one huge piece that would overwhelm her."

The impact was significant – not just academically, but personally.

"For her, success wasn't a top grade; it was achieving her target Grade 3. And she did that because of the way we were able to structure it and because of the resources Cambridge OCR provide."

The importance of clear language

It's short, it's sharp, it's simple... and that means we can support every learner."

Clear, simple language is another crucial factor, particularly for students with English as an additional language.

"If you've got a student who speaks very little English, it's not loads and loads of words they have to work through," Megan explains. "It's short, it's sharp, it's simple."

That clarity makes it easier for teachers to support students – and for students to succeed.

"It means we can support them in a way that's achievable," she says.

Combined with access to subject experts and support teams, clear communication helps teachers feel confident that they're giving every student the best chance of success.

Making assessment straightforward – for every classroom

Megan's experience highlights what accessible assessment looks like in practice:

- flexible contexts that all students can relate to
- clear, straightforward language
- assessment criteria that students can understand
- resources that are easy to find and use
- support that gives teachers confidence.

At Cambridge OCR, this is what making assessment straightforward means.

At St Paul's, accessible assessment is not about lowering expectations. It's about removing unnecessary barriers so every student can demonstrate their knowledge, build confidence and achieve their potential.

When assessment is straightforward, more students can show what they're capable of.



Find out more

If you want to make assessment more accessible for your students:

[Explore our accessibility approach](#)

[Speak to the team](#)

Because when assessment is straightforward, every student has the opportunity to succeed.