

Denbigh School

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A model school in a modern town

How has Denbigh, a mixed-ability school for 12 – 18 year olds, achieved a ten-fold improvement to become one of the best performing schools in the Milton Keynes area? Ask Chris Wood, Assistant Headteacher at Denbigh School, and he'll tell you about a unique partnership between pupils, parents and teachers that has propelled pupil learning through technology.

“Computers fascinate children. They relish the interactive capabilities that technology offers. A captivating electronic test that instantly reveals if their answer is correct, keeps the learning fresh and fun.” He continues, “The creativity and imagination that goes into their PowerPoint presentations is inspiring, and the findings from their on-line research efforts are incredible. Learning has become more enjoyable and rewarding for pupils, a theory reflected in their results.”

Parents' approval

This craving for ICT galvanised Mr. Wood to launch the 'Anytime Anywhere Learning' notebook ownership scheme, promoted by Microsoft, offering parents the opportunity to purchase a Toshiba Satellite notebook for their child. The cost would be at a reduced rate, exempt of VAT and interest, with payments spread across 3 years. To launch the initiative, parents were invited to an evening presentation where they witnessed

the technology in action. “For many, this was the first time they'd seen a website. The parents immediately realised the benefits of notebook ownership, and the response was overwhelming,” states Mr. Wood.

As with every good idea, there is a risk. The quality of the notebooks had to be exceptional, otherwise parents could return them at any time during the 3-year contract, leaving the school to pay the balance. “We did our homework before selecting and recommending Toshiba's notebooks to the families,” explains Mr. Wood. “Even though these notebooks are at the peril of teenagers, they have proved to be extremely reliable and robust!”

Thumbs up from pupils

A Year 10 pupil with special needs, explains how he has benefited from owning a notebook. “I can't write very quickly, and find it difficult to copy down the teacher's notes in class. Since owning a notebook, I can now type faster than I can write, so keeping up with the lessons is easier.”

Two Year 9 students at this 1,300 pupil-strong school, think the best thing about owning a Toshiba Satellite notebook is creating a well-presented piece of work which “looks neat and is fun to prepare. Also, we don't have to haul heavy books around anymore!”



Case Study

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The big debate – an exercise in character-building

Big fans of the school's on-line debating community, both Year 9 students regularly contribute to discussions ranging from religion to politics. Staff are stunned at the profound level in which students communicate with each other via the school's website. Mr. Wood confesses, "To begin with, we were a little anxious that the topics posted by the pupils might be unfavourable. Instead, we've discovered a stimulating environment where students express themselves without inhibition."

School's (not) out!

Uniting the school's wide range of technology including desktops, electronic whiteboards, servers and notebooks is a wireless LAN (local area network). This system enables users to access information anywhere on site, without connecting to a telephone line or electricity. Teksys – an authorised Toshiba reseller – converted the network into a mobile solution in just two days. Specialists in education, Teksys are known for providing innovative yet practical ICT solutions tailor-made for each school. Mr. Wood was surprised at the speed and the smoothness of the project: "I had envisaged the network being down for much longer, and also expected a period of fine tuning. Thanks to the professionalism of the team at Teksys, we were fully operational within a few days, and haven't experienced any hiccups."

The mobile classroom

The move to mobile computing was triggered by lack of space and the pupils' insatiable appetite for ICT. This familiar dilemma was solved with a novel solution – the mobile classroom. The school purchased 30 Toshiba Satellite notebooks, a standard network printer with a radio access point, and placed

them all on individual trolleys. The wireless connectivity enables the trolleys to be manoeuvred anywhere in the school, without the need for cables or sockets.

Private tuition

Teachers have also bought into the private notebook ownership scheme and, with the aid of speech recognition software and headsets, provide more detailed feedback on students' coursework. "A sixth form student will e-mail projects to his tutor, who will respond via voicemail. This faster method of marking allows teachers to relay comments in-depth, and because the notebooks can be taken home, many teachers catch up with marking in the evenings," explains Mr. Wood.

Interception through innovation

One Denbigh teacher revels in having on-line access to the school's main office: "Truancy is no longer a problem for us. The electronic register is taken every lesson not just at the start of the day. Absenteeism is immediately flagged to the school matron, who instantly telephones the parents. In many cases, the parents intercept the pupil before they reach home!"

The campaign for computers

Denbigh's intention is for every pupil to have individual remote access. Even though the notebook ownership scheme is still new, its obvious appeal to pupils, parents and teachers has provoked a mini revolution, as more orders for notebooks are placed - all for the cause of raising student attainment.

For further information on this success story and Toshiba's range of technology products and services, please contact Toshiba on 01932 822814 or e-mail educationPCs@toshiba.co.uk

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