



Thomas Deacon Academy

SMART story

Thomas Deacon Academy

Improving learning through enhancing young peoples engagement

The Thomas Deacon Academy opened in a new building in 2007. It combines three previous secondary schools and offers specialisms in mathematics and science. The school interior reflects its ethos. Learning and practice are designed to be shared experiences: classrooms have glass walls facing on to open plan walkways. There is a feeling of transparency and purposefulness.

Use of technology is a key aspect of the Academy's innovative mix. A core aim is to improve learning through enhancing young people's engagement. Steve Warburton, Director of Innovation and Development, sees each classroom as being like a "mini-amphitheatre", focused on a SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard. For independent learning, there are 400 devices that provide access to the school's virtual learning environment (VLE) as well as 20 ICT suites around the building. Teachers find it easy to share approaches and materials through using SMART Notebook™ and the VLE means that no student need get left behind. Students say they enjoy school more and indicators of learning outcomes show rising attainment.

Choosing SMART

Steve believes it is important that a single technology solution is applied across the whole organisation. Teachers and students find the same equipment in every classroom and this promotes confidence in use and consistency of practice. SMART Technology products offer interactivity that is very intuitive – even including "finger" control – and teachers feel that this has contributed to their success in increasing student participation, particularly for younger age groups. Steve is also keen to establish as integrated a system as possible. The fact that SMART offers an extensive portfolio of interactive technologies such as the document

"Young people live in a particularly interactive world. They get an immediate response to what they do. It's all about immediacy and participation. It's important to use technology that plays to this enthusiasm."

Steve Warburton, Director of Innovation and Development

camera, SMART Response voting device and SMART Audio means that there are no barriers to aspects of kit working effectively together.

At the start, Steve provided basic training on using the SMART Board and encouraged staff to 'play' to extend their learning. One-to-one coaching was available as needed. Training by Steljes was the second wave and pitched at three levels to take account of learners' differing needs and learning styles. This responsiveness helped teachers to progress quickly. Since then responsibility for training new staff and updating existing staff has transferred to a 'lead' staff member in each subject 'college'.



Quick facts

Location: Peterborough, England

Student population: 2,094

Students aged: 11-19

Technology: SMART Boards,
Notebook Software

Impact on learning: Steljes
Education Development
Consultants

Training Steljes Education
Development Consultants

Impact on learning:

- increase in student engagement
- more sustained attention to tasks
- improved learning retention.

SMART at the heart of teaching and learning

Bryony Fordham and Kevan Fryatt are two teachers who put SMART Notebook software at the hub of the learning environment. Using Notebook they are able to annotate over the lessons and save them on the school network thereby giving a history of the lesson. This is encouraging best practice and helping them to raise educational standards.

Kevan makes extensive use of the stored images and interactivity. For example, in his science lessons he can quickly show students how to assemble the apparatus needed for an experiment; or he can use the 'drag and drop' facility as a lesson starter to get students to label key parts of a scientific instrument. Students are keen and responsive and Kevan has seen an increase in the number of hands going up and the percentage of those who get the answers right. These methods enable him to keep up the pace of the lesson, which in turn facilitate more effective classroom management.

As an NQT, Bryony has been at Thomas Deacon for eight months in her first year of teaching. She teaches Religious Education, a subject that can be difficult to communicate and that, in her experience, tends to be traditionally taught. She has found imaginative ways to use the SMART Board to bring difficult topics to life and provide an environment where pupils can work collaboratively, make decisions and solve problems. For one particularly successful lesson she incorporated links to video clips of young people's conversations from Israel and Gaza to explore the concept of the value of interfaith dialogue. In their examination, several students drew on the examples she had shown to analyse whether interfaith dialogue was a worthwhile process.

"This helped to lift the subject off the paper. It gave it a real life context that helped the students to engage and understand the whole thing better."

Bryony Fordham, RE teacher in the Humanities College

Kevan and Bryony both feel that that technology has boosted their confidence as well as their repertoire of teaching and learning methods. Bryony says that she is able to structure lessons better and engage more effectively with her students. It enables her to make her teaching more interactive and varied. She is also better at mentoring individual students: if she wants to, she can use the lesson objectives she regularly posts on the SMART Board as a framework for checking progress in their learning outcomes. Kevan believes that use of the SMART Board enhances the students' faith in his knowledge and professionalism and helps them to get more involved with him and vice versa.

"My students and I collaborate on the SMART Board. They can come into my learning space and I can go out into their space."

Kevan Fryatt, lead teacher for ICT in Science in the Science College

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