

# Case study



## Ballakermeen High School An engaging experience

In learning to make the best of new technology such as interactive whiteboards, there is no substitute for actually using it or learning from other people's experiences.

The best approach to make a positive impact in schools when installing new technology is to engage everyone in the process – pupils as well as teachers – and make sure that experiences and resources are shared throughout the school community. That way, nobody feels isolated and the enthusiasm of the keenest users can rub off on even the least technically minded.

This is a strategy which Ballakermeen High School in Douglas, Isle of Man, has found extremely successful in its implementation of SMART Board interactive whiteboards throughout the school.

Julia Duffy has been teaching at Ballakermeen for 20 years and is the school's head of languages. She started using the interactive whiteboards not long after the school first obtained one and has never looked back.

The school obtained its first interactive whiteboard nearly six years ago and now almost every classroom in the school boasts a SMART Board. Even those rooms still without one are equipped with a data projector.

The technology caught on very quickly in the school after Assistant Headteacher, Annette Baker, began to use one. Annette was head of languages at the time and after seeing a demonstration of a SMART Board, she was sufficiently impressed to become part of a pilot programme to purchase the school's first one for use in ICT and languages. She also took pains to communicate her enthusiasm to the rest of the staff.

### Challenge

To engage an entire school community with the integration of new AV technology and make it a living, vibrant part of the curriculum.

### SMART solution

SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards implemented throughout the school help to revolutionise teaching methods in the classroom and bring added interest to every student.

### Result

The technology has become such an important asset to modern teaching that life without the boards now seems almost impossible.

As Julia says: "After seeing what Annette could do with her board, everybody started clamouring for them." ICT is very well provided in the school, which has around 1,500 students aged between 11 and 18 years old. It has the largest number of computers in a single school on the Isle of Man with about 300 PCs for ICT use.

The school believes that standardising operating procedures helps to avoid unnecessary complications with ICT, and so a single operating system – the Windows PC platform – is used exclusively throughout the school.

Similarly, while some schools might have a variety of interactive whiteboards from different manufacturers, creating a need to train staff in a number of different operating formats, Ballakermeen has installed only SMART Boards, greatly simplifying training requirements. Using SMART Boards has another advantage to the school in terms of reliability. "We have never had any real problems with them at all," says Julia.

"There have certainly been no breakdowns and we've found the interactive whiteboards incredibly reliable."

All staff throughout the school are trained to operate the boards and are encouraged to use them extensively, but the languages department, where they were pioneered, uses them more intensively than anywhere else. As Julia says: "It's rare that you'll find a lesson in languages in Ballakermeen where an interactive whiteboard isn't switched on and not just as a screen to project information onto."

There are a number of reasons why the boards are so important to Julia's department. "For one thing, they've completely replaced the use of flashcards in language teaching. Where we used to have these flat, dog-eared cards, the same information that they contained can be presented in Microsoft® PowerPoint®, or using SMART's own Notebook™ software. The information is so much brighter and clearer up there on the screen, and you can use it to do a far greater range of activities than you ever could with cards, including adding sounds and speech, a real asset to language teaching. It's incredibly versatile."

Getting the school's pupils involved is vital. "Children are fascinated by technology, but you have to make sure that the resources you create for them are genuinely interesting so that they want to become engaged with them. It's essential to get as many activities as you can where the students are coming up to the board and using it themselves."

Talking to Julia, her very real enthusiasm for interactive whiteboards as a teaching and learning tool shines through. "It's so much a part of our lives now here at Ballakermeen High School that it's difficult to remember what it was like to use the board for the first time. I certainly couldn't do without mine. I feel at times that I wouldn't be able to teach without it any more. In fact, recently the projector in my room went down and I was tearing my hair out in frustration until it was fixed."

The approaches taken by Julia and Ballakermeen High School can support other users. Encouraging staff to use the boards as more than just screens for their projectors, to share their experiences and resources together with encouraging students in being active users, has worked. As a result, the boards have become such an integral part of teaching and learning in the school, and particularly the languages department, that life without the boards now seems almost impossible.

As Julia herself says: "The school has found that the boards are a great motivator because they're big, colourful, and 'in your face.' They love it and without them I'd be bereft."

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**Julia Duffy, Teacher,  
Ballakermeen High School.**

## About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is both the industry pioneer and global education market segment leader in easy-to-use interactive whiteboards and other group collaboration tools. The award-winning SMART Board interactive whiteboard is the most widely installed interactive whiteboard in the world.

Many school jurisdictions have standardised on the product, which is used to provide interactive learning opportunities and enhance student achievement in more than 450,000 classrooms spanning every U.S. state, every Canadian province, every Local Authority in the UK and in more than 100 countries worldwide. SMART products also include interactive pen displays, interactive digital signage, wireless slates and software. Using SMART products, groups can access and share the information they need to meet, teach, train and present. SMART's education customers include New York City Board of Education (U.S.), Oxford University (UK), Kobe City Board of Education (Japan), Barrier Public School (Australia), University of Ottawa (Canada), United World College (Singapore), Stephen-Hawking-Schule Neckargemuend (Germany), Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (U.S.) and Harvard University (U.S.).

SMART is a private company founded in 1987. Employing more than 900 people, SMART is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with assembly facilities in Ottawa, and offices in Bonn, Tokyo, China, New York City and Washington, DC. SMART has been issued and maintains a broad portfolio of patents with numerous U.S., Canadian and other patents pending. In 1992 SMART formed a strategic alliance with Intel® Corporation that resulted in joint product development and marketing efforts, and Intel's equity ownership in the company. SMART products are sold through dealers across North America and distributors worldwide. For more information, visit [www.smarttech.com](http://www.smarttech.com).

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