



Charlestown Primary School

SMART story

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Learning to share

A small inner city school in Salford, Greater Manchester, Charlestown is a shining beacon of hope in an area of massive social deprivation. Described as "outstanding" in its last Ofsted report, the school is committed to really engaging its pupils in learning through the effective use of ICT – and SMART technology is playing a crucial role in delivering improved educational outcomes for these underprivileged youngsters.

The vast majority of Charlestown's pupils qualify for free school meals, and the number of non-English speakers has gone up from 8% two years ago to 20% - which is way above the national average. Yet despite these challenges, the school remains true to its conviction that whatever their backgrounds or circumstances, children will respond positively if they find lessons interesting and engaging.

"Today's technology offers lots of exciting opportunities to get kids interested, and we've invested heavily in ICT in recent years," says Deputy Head teacher Steve Kirkpatrick. "We have a small ICT suite with two banks of conventional laptops, but the major development this year is towards 1:1 computing using ultra mobile PCs. SMART Sync is a vital component of this, providing the glue that links all our ICT into a single cohesive system."

Formerly known as SynchronEyes, SMART Sync classroom management software enables the teacher to connect to every other computer or laptop in the networked classroom and see at a glance thumbnails of every individual's screen. As well as broadcasting screens to selected pupils or the whole class the teacher can deliver personalised lessons, sending different work to different groups ensuring that each lesson is individually tailored to each pupil's needs.

"From a teacher's point of view, it's great being able to see everything the children are

"...the real power of SMART Sync is its capability for sharing. The kids love to demonstrate their skills and show off their work to the rest of the class."

Steve Kirkpatrick, Deputy Head teacher, Charlestown Primary School



Quick facts

Location: Salford, Greater Manchester, UK

Student population: 220 pupils, 5-11 years

Technology: SMART Board interactive whiteboards, SMART Notebook 10, SMART Sync, SMART Response, AirLiner

Training: Informal coaching from Steljes, and in-house training

Impact on learning:

- Positive effects on pupil engagement, motivation and behaviour
- Encourages collaborative working and sharing of information

doing and having the ability to switch off all their computers to get their attention!" Steve continues. "But the real power of SMART Sync is its capability for sharing. The kids love to demonstrate their skills and show off their work to the rest of the class."

In particular, the school's innovative use of SMART Sync's chat facility is proving hugely popular and beneficial. "Some teachers worry about using chat functions in their classes, but once you get past the first few minutes the children use it properly and we've found that it's had a surprisingly positive impact," says Steve. "Thanks to MSN, Facebook and so on, kids are already familiar with the context and they're soon using it to share what they've found with their classmates – like copying and pasting web site addresses to each other."

As well as improving collaboration between the children, SMART Sync has also helped to consolidate and extend the use of the school's extensive suite of SMART products. Every classroom is equipped with a SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard and AirLiner™ wireless slate, and as Charlestown moves towards 1:1 computing across the curriculum SMART Sync will play an increasingly important role in linking these technologies into a more flexible and effective learning environment. For example, teachers are using SMART Response (the interactive response system formerly known as Senteo) more and more for ongoing assessment for learning, particularly in numeracy to test basic number skills. "They access it via SMART Sync, and it automatically marks it for the teacher and gives an immediate overview of individual and group results," explains Steve. "We've also created SMART Notebook files that mirror previous SATs exams so we get an immediate overview for cohorts. We also have a bit of fun with SMART Response, and recently used it for the whole school to vote in our 'Charlestown's Got Talent' competition!"

Of course, technology is only as good as the enthusiasm and skills of the teachers using it. "Good teachers will always take on a good idea," says Steve. "What frustrates them is when it doesn't work, and my role is to test-bed the technology and iron out any glitches before we roll it out across the school. Individual teachers then develop it for themselves and share their ideas. Use of SMART Notebook software is already ingrained in every classroom, and the next step is to build more shared resources on the network. That means that a supply teacher, for example, could pull the relevant lessons for the day straight off the network."

Although it's too early to accurately measure the effects of Charlestown's innovative use of ICT on educational results, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence that it has improved literacy skills and had a positive effect on pupils' engagement, motivation and behaviour. "The power of technology is helping us to think in a very different way about education, and move beyond the Victorian image of 30 kids in a box facing the teacher," concludes Charlestown Head teacher Daniel Gauld. "With SMART Sync, our children can collaboratively share their learning and work in virtual groups – and even when we have to withdraw a child from classroom for whatever reason, it's only physical exclusion and not educational exclusion. And that's the ultimate test of effective technology – whether it's helping the child to learn."

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