

Personlising learning

Isobel Mair School, Renfrewshire/Scotland



SMART Response™ interactive response systems give the pupils the confidence to participate and get more involved in the lesson.

As the only special school in East Renfrewshire, Isobel Mair educates children from 5 to 18 with a wide range of support needs, from severe to very complex learning difficulties. Providing a personalised approach to learning is paramount to achieving high levels of attainment and the SMART Response™ interactive response system is proving central to effectively tackling this challenge.

Isobel Mair started with one SMART Board® interactive whiteboard housed in its own room in April 2005. The technology has fundamentally changed how the pupils learn, how the teachers teach and how they work together. Passionate about SMART's technology and the impact it has on the pupils, the school now has eleven 2000i boards, one in every classroom, and is always on the look out for new SMART tools to complement the overall technology solution.

Isobel Mair bought three sets of eight SMART Response handsets and three receivers, making the system fully functional in three classrooms. It provides an effective means of assessing pupils and learning, not only in end of unit tests but as part of everyday teaching. SMART Response provides the teacher with instant feedback, demonstrating whether or not the lesson has been effective and if the pupils have grasped the main points.

"With such a broad range of learning styles and individual needs at Isobel Mair, the ability to tailor each pupil's learning experience is central to helping them reach their full potential," explains teacher, Ian Hallahan. "Using SMART Response in conjunction with Notebook software, I am able to keep a comprehensive record of each lesson and track the progress of each pupil, allowing me to personalise learning and ultimately improve the learning outcome."

The response system also provides an effective means of recapping and reinforcing key concepts or summarising the main points at the end of a lesson. For example, during a science lesson, pupils might be asked what happens when salt is added to water, and they choose A, B or C as the correct answer. SMART Response actively encourages the participation of all pupils, as the fear

Challenge

To harness the power of new technology to facilitate the education of pupils with learning difficulties and maintain their interest throughout the lesson.

Solution

SMART Board® interactive whiteboards, SMART Notebook™ software and SMART Response™ interactive response systems are utilised throughout the school allowing teachers to create bespoke multi-sensory materials for their students with special needs.

Result

SMART Response interactive response systems give the students the confidence to participate, help to alleviate their inhibitions and get more involved in the lesson.

of embarrassment is removed. Rather than a show of hands, each pupil responds anonymously by pressing the corresponding button on their individual hand sets; only the teacher has access to the information collected, providing a specific knowledge base for each pupil, enabling them to offer additional support to those pupils that need it and plan future lessons.

“SMART Response gives the pupils the confidence to participate – it helps to alleviate their inhibitions and get more involved in the lesson,” says DHT, Sarah Clark “Holding their attention is central to achieving a successful learning outcome and SMART Response is proving invaluable in keeping them engaged.”

At Isobel Mair, any teaching aid needs to be flexible enough to appeal to a wide range of ages and capabilities. Indicating yes or no, true or false or simply choosing a happy or sad face is most relevant for some pupils, but for the more cognitively able, typing in a figure or letter is more appropriate and a numeric keypad can be used.

Not only is SMART Response™ used for assessment, but also just for fun; motivating pupils, engaging their attention and encouraging group participation and social interaction. A short quiz may be included at the start of a more formal appraisal to get the pupils engaged, easing the transition from fun, easy and safe questions to assessment.

“The SMART Response system is easy to use and the ergonomic style of the handset works really well for our pupils,” explains head teacher, Mari Wallace. “With the popularity of game shows such as ‘Who Wants to be a Millionaire’, this approach makes assessment fun, which is so critical to engaging our pupils.”

Isobel Mair has a People Council and when planning a social event, the pupils are asked what they would like to do. Avoiding the potential peer pressure of a ‘hands up’ situation, SMART Response encourages pupils to express their own opinion, rather than being influenced by others within the group. For similar reasons SMART Response also works well in staff meetings to enable anonymity and encourage honest responses.

“We’ve been so inspired by the incredible impact SMART technology has in supporting learning – it translates content into a more exciting and stimulating context for learning, which is invaluable in engaging pupils with such varying needs,” concludes Mari. If you could see the impact on the interactivity and inclusiveness of lessons, you’d be in no doubt about why we think SMART is so amazing. The children’s faces really do say it all.”



SMART solutions allow teachers to create bespoke multi-sensory materials for their classes.

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Sarah Clark,
Teacher, Isobel Mair School

About SMART

SMART Technologies Inc. is a leading provider of collaboration solutions that change the way the world works and learns. As the global leader in interactive whiteboards, our focus is on developing a variety of easy-to-use, integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, making collaboration and learning with digital resources more natural. Our products have transformed teaching and learning in more than two million classrooms worldwide, reaching over 40 million students and their teachers. In business, our Freestorm™ visual collaboration solutions improve the way that people work and collaborate, enabling them to be more productive and reduce costs.

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