



Case studies

24. New Invention Junior School, Willenhall, UK

Reporters: Roger Blamire and Mick James – February 2009



CONTENTS

1. Context of the school	3
2. Example of practice	3
3. Impact, barriers and enablers	3
3.1 School.....	3
ICT development plan, implementation strategy, organisational changes and attitudes	3
Resourcing.....	4
The curriculum and ICT	5
Assessment of ICT and ICT for assessment	5
Organisation of support.....	5
3.2 Teachers	5
ICT as a tool for communication and collaboration	5
ICT as a tool to improve the quality and efficiency of planning and administration	5
The pedagogical role of ICT to improve learning and teaching.....	6
ICT skills	6
Participation, motivation, confidence and performance.....	6
3.3 Learners.....	7
ICT skills	7
Motivation, participation and confidence	7
Participation in all aspects of school life: academic, social, personal.....	7
4. References	8

This is one of 25 case studies produced for STEPS, the Study of the impact of technology in primary schools, to illustrate the impact of ICT, on schools, teachers and learners, and to highlight barriers and enablers to its effective use in the school. Further information can be found at <http://steps.eun.org>.



The views expressed in this work are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.

This study has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture.

© European Commission

1. CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL

New Invention Junior School is in Willenhall, a former coal mining town to the north of Birmingham with a population of 40,000 and historically famous for the manufacture of locks and keys.

Some 350 children aged from 7 to 11 attend the school, and are taught by 14 teachers.



2. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE

The school's use of a learning platform led to a national ICT Excellence award in 2007 for extending learning beyond the school. The school has learnt much in five years' use of the system, particularly about learners use of it from home.

When the system was changed to SkillSpace, 11-year-olds were involved in reviewing the competing products. They, and the teachers, wanted a system that empowered them, allowing them to create and store their content, maintain blogs and provide a personal learning space accessible to all. The social networking aspects of the learning platform have allowed and encouraged the students to review each other's work critically. As with commercial social networking sites, students are able to display as much or as little of their personal home page as they want to others; these are important skills at such a young age.

By allowing students their own home page, teachers can often gain some insight into what motivates the child outside school and the school has used this to good effect in the past (for example, one child's very detailed knowledge and interest in space and astronomy). It also allows students to show what they consider to be important and gives them more self worth – they seem to put considerable effort into making this “a good piece of work”.

3. IMPACT, BARRIERS AND ENABLERS

3.1 SCHOOL

ICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN, IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY, ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES AND ATTITUDES

o **Barriers**

- o The local authority was undergoing a major performance review at the time of the system review (it is now managed by a commercial company), and so the school made the change without its support.

○ **Enablers**

- Every Child Matters policy is helpful because it makes the school ensure that all five of its components are covered, for example economic awareness.
- The Extended School initiative has led to the school being open for longer, which has enabled computer clubs and an early morning computer café to be offered.
- The introduction of time for planning, preparation and assessment has given teachers time outside classes.
- The Regional Broadband Consortium, WMnet, covers 14 local authorities in central England. Taking part in its conferences has exposed the school to fresh ideas from outside of the local area.
- The school has worked towards, and achieved, the ICT Mark using the Becta self-review framework (SRF).
- The school has the backing of governors and parents.
- The school provides teachers with challenges, encourages experimentation, and provides time to do it.
- The staff as a whole gel and are very positive towards incorporating ICT into their teaching.
- Visits to Singapore have inspired staff and given them fresh ideas, such as real world applications of ICT.
- Staff take part in conferences and visit exhibitions.
- The headteacher leads from the front, with a very strong vision for ICT and how it can change pedagogy.
- The school has no designated ICT leader or co-ordinator; ICT is cross-curricular.
- Computers were first introduced in the school for administration purposes.



RESOURCING

○ **Enablers**

- Netbooks have made it possible for pupils to use personally owned devices on a 1:1 basis. The school has bought 60 netbooks, allowing all 9-year-olds to take one home.

- Most children at the school already have games consoles (such as a Nintendo DS).
- Fast broadband – 19Mb/s will soon be available at the school.
- The school provides laptops for all teachers, and an interactive whiteboard (IWB) in every classroom. Teachers prepare lessons on the laptop then plug it in.

THE CURRICULUM AND ICT

- **Enablers**
 - The school has developed a curriculum for learning platforms, building on the benefits of children having personal portfolios and home pages.
 - ICT allows for more learning journeys, including open-ended exploration, problem-solving, and visiting and engaging with the world outside the school.

ASSESSMENT OF ICT AND ICT FOR ASSESSMENT

- **Enablers**
 - Teachers want, and predict more, ICT for assessment.

ORGANISATION OF SUPPORT

- **Enablers**
 - There is less focus on an ICT room, but more focus on making ICT available in study areas, the library and in classrooms.
 - A technician comes to the school once a week.

3.2 TEACHERS

ICT AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- **Enablers**
 - Parents are increasingly engaged via ICT and the learning platform.

ICT AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

- **Enablers**
 - The headteacher belongs to the Leading Leaders network of 100 headteachers. Becta provide professional development via the SLICT (Strategic Leadership of ICT) programme, with a termly visit to a school and a themed conference. Most

recently, the headteacher has begun to consider the potential of film and video-making.

- The school is able to send text messages to parents with important information such as when clubs are cancelled, or the school is closed because of snow.

THE PEDAGOGICAL ROLE OF ICT TO IMPROVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

- **Enablers**

- The future will bring less didactic teaching and more individualised learning, using the learning platform and digital media.
- Children are encouraged to be independent learners, in control of their own learning and not 'spoon fed'.

ICT SKILLS

- **Barriers**

- The ICT national curriculum is considered 'too simple' for children.

- **Enablers**

- ICT is a 'condition of teaching and is non-negotiable' – 'you cannot be a good teacher without using ICT'.
- Young teachers in the school tend to have more ICT skills – all have a social networking presence.
- The school is a magnet for ICT-enthusiast teachers.
- Younger 'ICT whizzes' (such as those with experience of social networking sites) are paired with older teachers with teaching wisdom (such as those with experience of differentiation) for authoring, confirming that teachers require pedagogical support as well as technical support.



PARTICIPATION, MOTIVATION, CONFIDENCE AND PERFORMANCE

- **Enablers**

- 70 per cent of staff undertake action research – the school is a teaching and learning academy.
- The school provides core ICT skills training for all teachers.

- Students act as a catalyst for teachers.
- Peer training is provided as needed.
- Good teachers are attracted by ICT and the learning platform.
- Teachers are encouraged to 'try out new things'.

3.3 LEARNERS

ICT SKILLS

- **Enablers**
 - 10-year-olds from the school tutored 16-year-olds in a secondary school (some collaborative work between the schools was planned, but it ended up with pupils from New Invention being more adept and quicker to learn to the extent that they coached the older children).
 - E-safety issues are covered once a term using SMART rules; 8-year-olds are taught good email practice and responsible creation of web content.

MOTIVATION, PARTICIPATION AND CONFIDENCE

- **Enablers**
 - There is home access for learners: older siblings get priority on the computer.
 - Access to the learning platform at home is by the child logging on and inviting the parent to look in.
 - Children set their own targets and use 'I can...' checklists to record progress.
 - There is an unmoderated homework help area on the learning platform that children use to help each other at home. Spot checks reveal no abuse of the opportunity; children treat it as an extension of school and behave appropriately.

PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF SCHOOL LIFE: ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, PERSONAL

- **Impacts**
 - In 2006, inspectors found that ICT was an emerging strength and rated the school 'satisfactory' in this respect; they considered that ICT was well used to capture children's interest.



- **Enablers**

- Students take netbooks home and use digital blue video cameras to make videos for the website and blogs.
- A buddy system, an online 'worry box' and surveys on the learning platform help create a climate of respect and give pupils a voice.

4. REFERENCES

- **Sources:**

- Interviews with teachers and observation of lessons.

- **Further information:**

- School website (www.invention-j.walsall.sch.uk).

