



ICT @ Whickham School

Introduction

2008 marks a significant period in the development of ICT at Whickham. Key staff have recently returned from the Team SLICT course run by NCSL and are using this as a catalyst to develop an enhanced school vision that will be implemented by curriculum change, new resources and new approaches to teaching and learning. Whickham School is committed to the development of an integrated approach to ICT, both in enhancing teaching and learning and in the delivery of discrete examination courses. September 2008 will see the introduction of a number of new initiatives and curriculum changes as we prepare for the opportunities and choices offered by the new 14-19 curriculum.

The Curriculum

The foundations for ICT are established at KS3 where ICT has been taught as a discrete subject since the introduction of the national pilot. From September 2008, we will be delivering a revised and condensed KS3 scheme of work to years 7 and 8. This will enable us to provide the opportunity for year 9 students to experience Functional Skills:ICT (levels 1 and 2) in preparation for exam entry in the summer term. All KS3 classes have a maximum of 22 students and are taught in sets from year 8 onwards – year 7 students are taught in mixed ability groups. From September, all KS3 students will have two 60 mins lesson per fortnight. From year 8 onwards, students studying only one foreign language receive an additional lesson per fortnight.

At KS4, ICT is offered through BTEC First for ICT Practitioners courses. We already offer the Diploma (4 GCSEs) and, as from September 2008, will also offer the Certificate (2 GCSEs). Students have achieved high levels of success on these courses, contributing to Whickham's high performance at GCSE. Their achievements have also provided the ideal stepping-stone for KS5 courses and beyond.

Functional Skills: ICT will also be developed for students studying the new Diploma for Society, Health and Development to respond to the demands of this innovation before these skills are firmly embedded in our new Functional Skills provision in year 9. Whickham School is part of the Gateway for the new Diplomas and we are a pilot school for the Edexcel Select ICT diploma. It is highly likely we will be offering the Specialised ICT Diplomas in the future.

The success of ICT at KS3 and KS4 has led to significant take-up at KS5 where the BTEC National Award for IT Practitioners course has been offered since September 2007. There has been large numbers of students in both year 12 and 13 opting for this two-year course. We are currently exploring the possibility of offering the Certificate from September 2009

Whole School ICT

The school is also committed to ICTAC and has worked to extend provision and access to ICT across the curriculum. All departments integrate ICT within their schemes of work and an ICT Management Group shares good practice. An Assistant Headteacher who amongst a range of responsibilities has a strategic overview of ICT leads this.

The school is part of the NCSL SLICT programme and is using this experience to lead the school towards e-maturity and beyond. We are currently exploring the heightened use of our VLE for pastoral and curriculum developments in order to enhance home-school learning and communication. e-portfolios are being developed that will enable teachers, parents and students to access and review their performance and wider achievements.

Our new website was launched in May 2007 and it has greatly enhanced home-school communication.

Resources

As an ICT department, we have a number of dedicated ICT rooms with the majority having IWB or projectors and white boards. We are looking to upgrade all rooms to IWB over the next few years.



The school currently has over 550 student accessible PCs and wireless laptops on a dedicated curriculum network, 35 IWB in addition to a further 10 rooms with projectors. Plans are in place to increase these resources in the future in addition to possibly providing students with a personal laptop. Teaching staff are provided with a secure wireless network laptop for their personal use both within and outside school. All curriculum network users have high-speed broadband Internet access and email via a dedicated curriculum network. All users have remote web access to certain areas of the school network via a downloadable software application.

We have a VLE platform through the Gateshead Grid and as an ICT department are looking to deliver the new KS3 courses via this medium. KS4 and 5 courses will follow suit in advance of the DCFS 2009 deadline.

The school has its own network manager who is supported by a full-time technician. We are currently interviewing for a second full-time technician. Whickham School is one of the five spoke schools of the Gateshead City Learning Centre based at The Watermark and since September, the department has made good use of its facilities to deliver Unit 2 and 15 for the BTEC National Award at KS5. Further use may be made for aiding delivery of elements of the BTEC First course.

Staffing

A Senior Curriculum Leader for ICT was appointed in September 2007 as part of a restructuring that recognised the centrality of ICT within Whickham School. The ICT Department provide students with cohesive and clear progression in ICT. A team that includes KS4 and a KS5 Coordinators supports the Senior Curriculum Leader.

Currently, KS3 ICT is taught by a large team of specialist and non-specialist teachers (the latter generally have a Technology background but considerable experience in the delivery and assessment of this Key stage). However, September 2008 offers exciting opportunities with a revised KS3 offer that will provide innovative developments for all members of the ICT department staff.

The school regards ICT as a key development priority and a number of colleagues have requested ICT training through the Performance Management Review process. Over 40 days of VLE training were provided in 2006-2007 alone. We have had a number of whole school INSET days and ICT training increasingly forms part of Twilight sessions and staff meetings to further develop our integrated approach to ICT.

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