

## **ICT @ Whickham School**

### **Introduction**

September 2010 marks a significant period in the development of ICT at Whickham and 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. Since September 2009, we have used 'ICT4Life' to teach and assess capability of the ICT curriculum across the entire Key Stage.

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. All KS3 students have two 60-minute lessons per fortnight but can gain an additional one-hour per fortnight in year 8 and an additional two hours per fortnight in year 9 if they study one or no languages.

From September 2010, all KS4 students will receive their two hours per fortnight entitlement (core time) to the subject. This is in addition to the current options programme offered by the department.

At KS4, ICT is offered through BTEC First for ICT Practitioners courses. In their core time, the majority of students will study for the new BTEC Certificate (worth one GCSE) and be able to extend this to Extended Certificates and Diplomas through using their option choices. Students have always achieved high levels of success in the BTEC First ICT Practitioner Certificate and Diploma 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 delivered in the core time for students studying one of the three Diplomas offered by the school. To date, we have been involved in pilot courses for both Edexcel and AQA Functional Skills:ICT and we will build on this experience to contribute towards the students' success with the Diplomas.

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 and have extended it to also offer the Certificate from September 2009.

Changes to the BTEC qualifications means we will now be able to offer qualifications with the equivalence of an AS, one A level or two A levels.

### **Whole School ICT**

The school is 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 a Deputy Head teacher who has a strategic overview of ICT leads this, amongst other responsibilities.

A number of subject areas have been successfully involved in ICT based activities including TES Newspaper Day, BBC School Report, and Animation Days. We are currently looking towards our Rich Experience Week at the beginning of July and how ICT can support activities or be the main focus eg researching family history.

## **Resources**

As an ICT department, we have a number of dedicated ICT rooms with Promethean IWB. Where possible, specialist ICT teachers are responsible for one room and this is usually their main teaching room. In order to maximise room usage, ICT rooms are normally timetabled for other subjects when there are no discrete ICT lessons.

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 providing some 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.

From September 2010, all sixth form students will be provided with a secure wireless netbook for use in school. It is not proposed that these replace PCs for ICT lessons but could free up the demand on ICT rooms for other year groups.

We have a VLE platform through the Gateshead Grid and some of the ICT resources are available through this medium. We are looking to increase this in line with DCfS recommendations.

The school has its own network manager who is supported by two full-time technicians. Whickham School is one of the five spoke schools of the Gateshead City Learning Centre based at The Watermark and the department has made good use of its facilities to deliver Unit 2 for both the BTEC National Award at KS5 and the BTEC First courses.

## **Staffing**

ICT is one of the newest departments in the school having been in place since September 2007. This was part of a restructuring that recognised the centrality of ICT within Whickham School. The ICT Department provides students with cohesive and clear progression in ICT. The Senior Curriculum Leader who also has the support of dedicated KS4 and KS5 coordinators leads the team.

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). The developments with KS4 and changes in staffing is giving us the opportunity to refine the department and provide a more focused and specialised teaching team across all Key Stages.

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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