

Interactive learning a hit beside the seaside



Darren Harryman, Bournemouth School for Girls' Network Manager, explains that everyone in the school could see the possible benefits the new technology could bring: "The teachers saw that the Interactive Whiteboards could animate lessons. They could be used in so many ways to help a teacher demonstrate complex concepts to the whole class that just cannot be replicated when pupils are huddled around a few computer screens. Learning becomes more collaborative. Pupils can add their own comments to information displayed on the whiteboard or show their own presentations to the class."

Setting the scene

When you think of Bournemouth, images of deckchairs, ice cream cones and children eating fish and chips come to mind. However, away from the penny arcades and dance halls, a quiet revolution is taking place in the classroom of one local school. Nestled in the North Eastern corner of this famous resort town, Bournemouth School for Girls is helping change the way teachers and pupils are engaging in lessons.

Winner of a School Achievement Award from the DfES, Bournemouth School for Girls is a grant maintained grammar school with nearly 1500 pupils aged 11-18. Despite a strong academic record, the school is always on the look out for ways of improving the learning experience for its pupils.

Many teachers agree that new technology can often help engage pupils in lessons by bringing the subject matter to life in a original way. The teachers at Bournemouth School for Girls are firm believers of this. Installed by Presentation Media, a leading local supplier of audiovisual equipment to schools, Bournemouth School for Girls is a proud owner of five of Hitachi's acclaimed interactive whiteboards, which are used to help animate subject matter and enrich lessons.

Hitachi's two interactive whiteboards, the Cambridge board and StarBoard, allow teachers to integrate different media into lessons. Computer programs or videos can be displayed on the screen and teachers can highlight text or images on screen using a specially adapted electronic pen. Additional notes can be included, along with graphs, designs or drawings, all of which can be saved to a computer for later use, printed out or distributed to pupils' PCs via the network.





Assessing the options - selecting the best

Two interactive whiteboards were originally installed in the ICT suites and proved so popular that the decision to buy five new boards was made. After examining many different makes, including the supplier of the original two whiteboards, the school selected the Hitachi StarBoard. Presentation Media was selected as the preferred supplier due to their enthusiasm and friendly approach. The school was presented with a selection of suitable options and Presentation Media worked with them to create the best solution possible.

As Network Manager, it was Darren Harryman's task to examine all the possible options and a checklist was drafted against which he measured the different resources available. Price was a key issue for the school but many other factors also came into the equation. "We definitely wanted value for money but we also wanted a respected brand so that we would be able to count on good service should we have any problems. Functionality and ease of installation were other important elements and it had to be robust. Any equipment in school will be subject to some damage and no matter how good the service agreement you do not want a valuable teaching aid out of action for any length of time. We wanted an interactive whiteboard that could hold up to the everyday wear and tear of school life." Finally, the equipment had to look good too. According to Harryman, "Hitachi's StarBoards fitted the bill in every category."

The new StarBoards were installed in the remaining ICT suites and were

extended into other subject areas including Maths, Geography and Sociology. Installation took place out of term time to ensure there was no disruption to teaching and was followed by thorough teacher training. This was another important factor for the school, as valuable teaching time can be wasted when teachers are not completely familiar with new equipment. The StarBoards have also enabled teachers to share resources they have prepared for classes, which has encouraged the exchange of best practice materials.

Immediate Impact

Since installation, the five new Hitachi StarBoards have been in constant use. Presentation Media's swift installation, immediate follow-up service and high quality staff training ensured the boards were fully operational across the school within weeks. In particular, they have had an impact on teaching ICT across the curriculum. "When demonstrating concepts using other computer programs, a teacher would often have to visit each pupil at their PC to ensure that they had understood the instructions. Now that the teacher can demonstrate exactly what to do on the StarBoard, many more pupils understand immediately and the lesson moves on a lot more quickly," says Harryman. The effect has been that ICT is being used far more widely in all subject areas.

In addition, the StarBoards have helped encourage teachers to use more animated lesson materials using applications such as PowerPoint. In class, teachers can flip between their prepared presentations and the

Hitachi StarBoard software to draw a diagram that explains a concept they have just covered in more detail. Once the class has grasped the concept the teacher can instantly flip back to the prepared lesson material and continue.

A hit with pupils and parents

The Hitachi StarBoards are a great hit with the pupils and parents too. "Pupils love them as they make lessons more dynamic. They also enjoy using the StarBoards for presenting their own materials," explains Harryman. The Hitachi StarBoards have been a great attraction at school open days, with parents and potential new students alike eager to try the technology for themselves.

The school has been so impressed with the experience of teaching with interactive whiteboards that they are planning to purchase five more and install them in new subject areas including Modern Languages and Science. Harryman believes this shows just how committed the school is to the technology. "Despite the funding pressures that all schools are under at the moment, Bournemouth School for Girls is planning to buy five new interactive whiteboards and that just shows how important the school feels this technology is to enriching the learning experience for pupils."

Hitachi Software Engineering (UK) Limited Alex Goudge

19 Heather Park Drive
Wembley, London, HA0 1SS
Tel: +44-20-8902-1286
www.hitachisoft-eu.com
info@hitachisoft-eu.com

Presentation Media Julie Mooney

Tel: +44-1202-483883
www.presentationmedia.co.uk
sales@presentationmedia.co.uk

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Inspire the Next

www.cambridgeboard.com