

Case Study: Net Books - Taking the Lesson Home



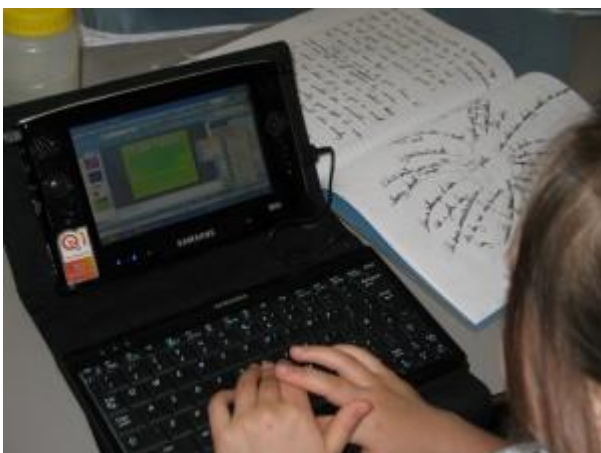
St John Baptist School in Lewisham, London, are leading the way in personalised learning. Now in its 3rd year, their net book project has really taken off. It's given the students aged 8 – 11 responsibility of their own net books- and of their study. John Goodey, Head Teacher of St John Baptist School, tells us how the project has helped to personalise learning and given students motivation to continue their lessons at home.

The Plan



St John Baptist School is a Church of England school in the borough of Lewisham, London. With over 200 students, and links to the church, the school encourages learning in a strong community environment. Three years ago they began a fascinating project to take personalised learning further- with the introduction of laptops to their students.

In 2008, St John Baptist launched their project for every student to have a laptop they could take home with them. This would enable students to have a seamless continuation of learning from the classroom to their home. With the Virtual Learning Platform also in place, students would be able to access their lesson plans and homework, as well as build up their e-portfolio and use forums to discuss their lessons further. Though the VLE makes it possible for students to access their classroom anywhere with internet access, giving them their own laptops took this portable learning a step further- giving them responsibility and trust with their learning.



“One of the important ideas behind the project was to make learning a seamless continuation,” explains John Goodey, Head Teacher at St John Baptist. “The children can access their studies at any time from home, and can carry it with them on their personal laptops. But one of the most valuable aspects of this project is the responsibility and motivation it gives the students. The children love it, and take care of their laptops. They have really enjoyed the responsibility, and this in turn has given them motivation to use their laptops and further their learning.”

The Process



In order to provide these laptops, funding had to be found. This was done primarily by monthly donations from the parents. St John Baptist suggested parents donated a monthly amount towards purchasing and upkeep of the net books, and many parents now donate a regular sum each month of £10 upwards. But there were other factors to consider too- such as the size of the laptops, how children could carry them easily, storing them within the classroom, and providing support to the school community as a whole to take the project forward.

Added to this, the school ran support sessions for parents and students alike after school, to help them with getting the laptops online at home, switching between networks and accessing the Virtual Learning Environment.

“The net books were chosen because they are small and lightweight,” added John Goodey, “so the children could transport them. We also provided back packs for the laptops to make this easier for them, and had to make arrangements for the furniture in the classroom to store the net books once the children brought them back in.”



The Impact

The project has been extremely successful in the school. The students have taken responsibility for their laptops and looked after them, while simultaneously benefiting from the extended learning they provide.

“The children have loved it,” adds John Goodey. “They have no problems at all with using the net books, and are acquiring the skills they need to prepare them for when they move on to secondary school. They enjoy the responsibility it gives them, and in turn, that gives them motivation. They are using a multitude of programmes, and using different tools in their virtual classroom such as forums and web pages. The children at St John Baptist see learning as important and know they can learn at anytime and anywhere. Learning is not something that only happens between 9am and 3.30pm”



As other schools in the UK are beginning to take up on similar projects, it is clear to see the highly positive impact this has had. With students no longer restricted to the classroom walls for learning, giving them a portable classroom they can access anywhere at any time can not only benefit the students themselves- but the school community as a whole.