

A tool for G&T children

Introduction

At Telford Infant School in Leamington Spa, three able Y1 students used Honeycomb in their Topic lessons on Neil Armstrong.

School

Most pupils in the school are of White British background although a range of ethnic minority groups are represented in the school population. The proportion of pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English is lower than average. The school has an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Attainment on entry is average. The school has gained the Investors in People (IIP) award, a Gold Artsmark award and the Local Authority Race Equality award.



This is a good school where pupils achieve well. 'Children come first in this school' is a typical parental comment. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive, saying that they 'love learning'. (OFSTED November 2007)

Pupils

The two boys and one girl who were chosen to use Honeycomb are all high ability students in Y1 and are very enthusiastic about the topic. They have very good ICT skills and have access to the internet at home. One of the children has difficulty with fine motor control and the teacher was curious to see whether he got frustrated when working at the computer.

Teacher

Diana Smith, the children's Y1 class teacher and the ICT Coordinator, describes herself as someone who is always willing to try new things with ICT and looks for ways to include ICT in her teaching. She has recently been working with Colin Talbot, an E-Learning Adviser from the ICT Development Service in Warwickshire, on achieving the ICT Mark.

Diana managed the Honeycomb project and was closely involved in what the children did however it was Colin who regularly supported the three children. He uploaded multimedia for each individual child, converted video files and also supervised the children using a USB microphone and recording into Podium, software with which they weren't familiar.



Why they were keen

As ICT Coordinator and a member of the SMT, Diana had attended a course on Learning Platforms and came away with sensible concerns over how a Learning Platform could be used with infant children. When it was suggested that Honeycomb could possibly form part of a Learning Platform in the future she was enthusiastic to try it out.

"I like trying new things... I'm very excited about ICT you see!" Diana Smith

What they did

"We have been doing loads of things about Space." Y1 Pupil

The class topic was Neil Armstrong and so the children created a homepage and blog pages about Space, Neil Armstrong and other related subjects suggested by Colin or the children. They used a variety of multi-media resources including sounds (from <http://audio.lgfl.org.uk>) and videos (from <http://www.britishpathe.com>) as well as text, pictures created in Splish and recordings of themselves.

Only the three selected children had their own Honeycomb pages however Colin did involve the whole class through a class page. He also shared with them the work being created by their classmates. Each of the participants went home and showed their work to their parents and some of them added more work from home. This was not directed by Colin or Diana, the children were just very enthusiastic and rightly proud of their work.

"The three of them have told me that they've been on it at home and shown their parents. I think all three have been very excited by it!" Diana Smith

Week 1 – Homepage – Class and group session considering what might be useful to have on a 'homepage' e.g. "What would a visitor to the page find interesting?" Learning how to add text and position pictures, sounds and videos.

Week 2 – Blog entries – Developing the home 'Space' page and adding blog pages with information about Neil Armstrong. Learning how to add their own pictures, recording narration using Podium and adding those sound files.

Week 3 – Blog entries – Adding further blog pages related to Space but encouraging the children to decide for themselves the subject matter and content. Learning how to view other Honeycomb users, give and receive stickers.

Week 4 – Polishing and sharing – Encouraging the group to polish and tidy up their pages. Demonstrating and explaining their Honeycomb work to the rest of the class.

"First we were working on our homepage and I thought it was really good but then we got onto the blog and I thought it was even better!" Y1 Pupil

When they did it

There was not a regular slot for using Honeycomb but the class teacher was happy for children to work with Colin when he was available, including during their OFSTED inspection! In total, they used Honeycomb approximately twice a week for 4 weeks, for about 1.5 hours a time while the rest of the class carried on with their lessons. The children also looked at Honeycomb at home. One pupil wowed everyone by having uploaded work he'd done at home and adding it to a new blog entry:

"I've been making new pictures on Paint – and it's really quite similar to Splosh except that you can't always make everything into red when you want to... I saved it into Honeycomb."
Y1 Pupil

Impact and benefits

Diana feels that there is huge potential for Honeycomb to strengthen the already strong links which exist between home and school, especially if it becomes possible to add comments. Using the software has made her feel more positive about using a Learning Platform in the future and any fears she had about e-safety have also been allayed through the existence of passwords.



Using Honeycomb has made her very conscious of the future need to ensure that all children have access to the internet outside of school hours, if tools such as this are to be truly successful and she is considering how to best manage this.

Learning

Using Honeycomb has enhanced the children's learning about Neil Armstrong and Space. They have been inspired to find out more about the topic away from the computers and are asking to add their learning into their blogs. The children have really enjoyed using multi-media, especially adding and watching the videos which have also helped to enhance their knowledge and understanding.

Colin was clearly impressed by the ICT skills that the children had developed through the project and by the end, *"they were doing lots of that saving, uploading, arranging stuff on the page in Honeycomb for themselves which I think was really good."*

Top Tip!

"Play! Just play and get totally engrossed in it really and let the children play." Diana Smith



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