

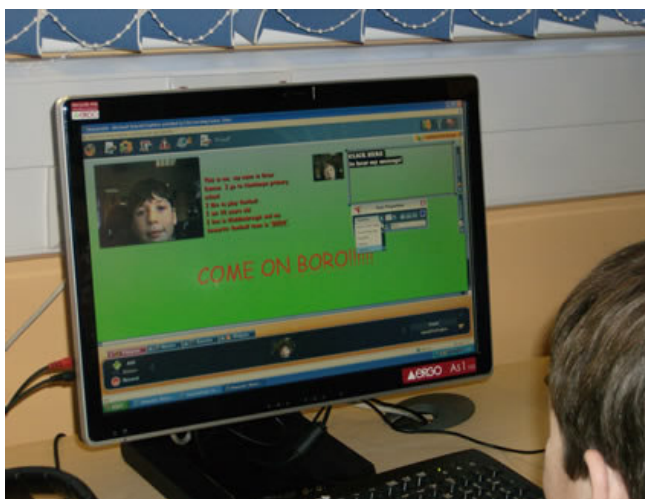
Darlington and Redcar-and-Cleveland's Honeycomb pilot project

Joined-up: collaboration and connections

As national leaders in the teaching of MFL to primary pupils, as well as experienced users of learning platforms, the neighbouring authorities of Darlington and Redcar-and-Cleveland were both keen to develop the pupil use of web 2.0 technologies. They were looking for appropriate web-based software to incorporate into the regional learning platform to facilitate collaboration between pupils across the authorities and foster peer-review of written, spoken and visual use of french as a common MFL.

“Can't speak French, so we'll let the funky software do the talking...”

Honeycomb represented the best and most exciting option to deliver these objectives, with its simple controls, selective publishing options and the fact that new teacher-skills needed were minimal. 6 schools were chosen across the two authorities to pilot the use of Honeycomb in the classroom where the uploading of images, direct recording of video and sound onto the page and peer-review could enable critical self-analysis, build confidence in communication in alternative languages and develop relationships. The schools chosen represented a cross-section from both authorities, with support offered from both language advisors and eLearning teams.



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Teachers

The only common factors among the teachers concerned was an interest in teaching MFL, a willingness to try something different and an excitement at sharing ideas. Draw n from a mix of Y3 to Y6, the pupils have widely different socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of experience with ICT.

What they did

Learning in the classroom is innovative, with little pupil writing and a concentration on both auditory and Text-ease-style learning to reinforce language skills. Only later in the primary curriculum is writing introduced to match the sounds and words learnt to their written form.

Honeycomb's ability to record directly to the web site either video or sound thus enables the pupils to share their learning without relying on any written ability.

The interface is very easy to work with - Once introduced to their log-ins, the pupils intuitively grasped how to upload existing images and sounds. After some practice in pairs , the Y5 pupils recorded a conversation about buying fruit from a shop directly into Honeycomb using the class laptops; both pupils were able to select the shared file to add to their own page. Y4 Pupils were photographed making numbers using their bodies, (arms held upright to form "un", etc.) and made up a rhyme using images uploaded by the teacher (or in one case, the "class photographer"). They clicked to type (in true Text-ease-style), added the rhyme and included the images from the shared bank.

Other pupils filmed themselves having a conversation about colours, pets and where they lived using a webcam, saving the file onto their desktop for editing. Once happy with the film, they uploaded the project and added the written transcript. Because Honeycomb allows selective publishing, the teacher can choose to allow pupils to publish to the rest of the class or to a wider audience, in this case, cross-authority to the participating schools in Redcar. Peer-to-peer reviews can then take place, with comments being left by the other pupils.



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When they did it

Initially, pupils used Honeycomb as part of the MFL lesson, but the obvious enthusiasm which they showed spilled over into out-of-school-hours working, with the children choosing to share their work with their parents and in some cases uploading sounds of their family learning the new vocabulary at home. Turning the tables on traditional parent-child relationships. Youngsters teaching the rest of the family has had a noticeable impact on the self-confidence of some of the pupils.

Impact and benefits

Engagement in lessons and materials has been noticeable. There has been little impact on teacher-time needed to train because the software is intuitive and often led-by the pupils. This has meant that teachers are free to manage the learning, rather than having to know the ins and outs of new software. Anytime, anywhere, zero-footprint access to share with parents and peers has helped with school-home relationships and develop learning out of school hours. Peer-review has helped build relationship skills and develop self-awareness in on-line communities the pupils are already used to, whilst the Internet aspects of the software have allowed reinforcement of e-safety issues and the increased awareness of digital footprints in creating a true e-Portfolio

Top tip! When using a web-cam, be aware of distracting backgrounds/noises, especially if using at home!



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