

Trinity Primary School

Fulfilling potential with interactive technology



“I’m delighted to see how we’ve all moved on from just using the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard as a simple presentation tool to using it as a truly interactive learning tool”

Helen Donaldson, Acting Deputy Head Teacher, Trinity Primary School.

On nearly every measurement, Trinity Primary School in Edinburgh is well ahead of the game. Its diverse pupil population continues to achieve extremely high national attainment targets in maths, reading and writing, while levels of absenteeism, lateness and exclusion are very low compared to other primary schools in the authority. Trinity prides itself on providing enterprising teaching and varied learning opportunities underpinned by an inclusive, supportive ethos, yet there is one aspect where Acting Deputy Head Teacher Helen Donaldson feels there is always room for improvement:

“This is a wonderful school, but I felt that we were missing a huge opportunity to make our teaching and learning even better through greater use of interactive technology,” she explains. “Initially we had one SMART Board interactive whiteboard in the Science room, but it wasn’t used very much as no one really knew how to! I was worried that we were in danger of falling behind similar schools in our use of this technology.”

At the time, Helen was required to plan and implement a school improvement project as part of her Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) professional development programme. Not surprisingly, she chose enhancing learning and teaching through IT and active learning as her theme. With limited budget, Helen managed to convince the school’s Parent Staff Association (PSA) to invest significant funds on this major IT improvement programme rather than on a number of smaller items. These funds were matched by a successful grant award with a small top-up from the school’s budget to achieve her goal of a SMART Board interactive whiteboard in each of Trinity’s 12 classrooms.

Of course, it’s one thing having the right technology installed – but it’s quite another ensuring that it’s used

effectively. The school’s teaching staff varied widely in terms of age, experience and computer literacy, though shared the fact that none had received any previous training in operating a SMART Board interactive whiteboard. Professional development was therefore crucial to the success of the project. “A key to implementing this improvement plan was to build collaborative working practice through staff development and training,” explains Helen. “We shared a common starting point of zero knowledge, and together we built a true learning together ethos which we’ve also shared with our students, neighbouring schools and visiting staff.”

At the heart of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard is SMART Notebook 10, easy-to-use collaborative learning software that enables teachers to add interactivity to lessons through an array of powerful education tools and resources. Training in this key area was delivered by Steljes, the authorised distributor of SMART Technologies in the UK. “I’m delighted to see how we’ve all moved on from just using the SMART Board as a simple presentation tool to using it as a truly interactive learning tool,” says Helen. “SMART Notebook 10 is a fantastic product and we’re really starting to make use of its potential.”

Buoyed by their new-found skills and confidence, even the most reluctant members of the Trinity School staff are now happily using their SMART Board interactive whiteboards as part of their everyday teaching. "The SMART Board is always on in every classroom, and the kids absolutely love it! Whether we're using it to take the register or as part of a classroom challenge, the interactive whiteboards are now built-in to their learning," explains Helen. "The whiteboards were previously seen as something that teachers used, but now the children are more comfortable using it – and often pick things up quicker than their teachers!"

With its rich set of features and digital resources at the user's fingertips, SMART Notebook software gives back valuable time to the teacher. "Because the software is so intuitive and easy to use, it takes away a lot of preparation time and gives it back to teaching," Helen continues. "We can quickly create lessons and share resources with other people, and then keep up the pace of lessons and not waste time."

The reaction from teachers has been overwhelmingly positive as they find new and more creative ways of using the technology. "I would be at a loss without it!" says one. "I use it on a daily basis and am pleased with how it supports different styles of pupil learning." Another says: "Pupils are more actively involved in their learning – they love the lesson activities and games in Toolkit 2.0 and I can easily tailor these to my teaching and their

learning needs." A third comments on the flexibility of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard: "Invaluable – far beyond a chalkboard – it's a talking point, demonstration board, DVD and music player, lesson starter, story starter and a lesson organiser."

As the school's use of interactive learning technology continues to evolve, all pupils now have SMART Notebook 10 on their laptops. "Children learn best when they have to show their teachers or classmates their work, and they now create their own challenges," says Helen. "Our aim is to develop this even further, and we're currently part of a SMART pilot study using some more of their interactive learning products."

Helen and her colleagues are now experimenting with three SMART Slates purchased by the PSA, which connect wirelessly to the computer and interactive whiteboard to enable teachers and pupils to interact with digital content from anywhere in the room. "In addition to classroom use, we also use them in assembly, where they're passed to children to write on the slates and display things on the screen," explains Helen. "It gets them more engaged and they don't have the embarrassment of having to come up to the front."

Trinity School has also been trying out SMART Document Camera, which instantly displays real-time images of moving or static objects on the interactive whiteboard for the whole

class to see, and SMART Response – an interactive response system that provides instant feedback to teachers and pupils. "We have to keep looking ahead, as we're still only scratching the surface of what's possible," concludes Helen. "The trouble is, most teachers simply don't have the time to find out for themselves, so we need to make it clear to them how interactive learning products like SMART Board and SMART Notebook 10 software can make their jobs easier. Technology should be an integral part of the planning and delivery of learning and teaching – and the way to make it work is by sharing."



"SMART Notebook 10 is a fantastic product and as a learning community we are committed to continue to develop its value in enhancing learning and teaching at Trinity Primary. We are proud of how far we have come and excited to see where the future will take us"

Helen Donaldson, Acting Deputy Head Teacher, Trinity Primary School.

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