

Developing the home–school partnership using ICT

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Leas Infants School

www.leasinfants.ne-lines.sch.uk/

The scene could be any staffroom at lunchtime. You are multi-tasking – eating your banana, mentally running through your list of ‘jobs to do’, listening to a colleague’s concerns about a pupil, trying to remember what was in your planning for the afternoon when a voice is heard to say, *‘How about the school having its own web site?’* This was the throwaway question that sowed the seed, which germinated and finally grew into www.leasinfants.ne-lines.sch.uk.

It would have been relatively easy to buy into a commercial web site building package but we like a challenge. We wanted to produce a web site with a content that was personal to the school. By creating the web site ourselves we felt we would have control of not only its content, but would have the enthusiasm to promote its use in school. Two years down the line, we can say creating the web site has been a huge challenge with our learning curve nearly shooting off the scale!

The Leas Infants school is situated in the village of Waltham, near Grimsby in North East Lincolnshire. It opened as a school in its own right in September 1979. There are 240 pupils on roll, nine full-time class teachers, four Teaching Assistants and one Nursery Nurse. The school is semi-open plan in design with two teachers and two classes of children sharing a unit. The school has four teaching units, a

mobile classroom, a central hall and library area. In addition, there is a separate ICT suite and the whole school, including the mobile classroom is networked.

Our present level of ICT equipment is: 10 iMacs in the ICT Suite; 12 iMacs in classrooms; 2 Macs in Library; 1 iMac in foyer for parental use; 6 iBooks on wireless network for enhancing provision in classrooms; and Powerbooks for the senior management team.

Our own background is that we are both KS1 teachers, sharing an enthusiasm for developing the use of ICT both in school and home. We have been concerned with devising practical uses for ICT in the classroom and not the acquisition of an in-depth understanding of the technicalities of computers. Megabytes and gigahertz are still a mystery to both of us. We found that our technical knowledge and skills increased rapidly as we became involved in the creation of the school web site.

To create the web site we needed to develop our own ICT skills. We attended web site authoring courses together. The courses were held on four separate days where we learnt the individual components needed to build a web site. These were the use of web authoring software, the scanner and the digital camera. Even though the courses equipped us

with new skills it was the many hours of trial and error in our own time that resulted in our first attempt at the school web site. We are continuing to use these skills as we update the web site termly

The decision to train two members of staff in web site building has been extremely beneficial to the school. It has meant that the web site has been created more quickly and is updated more often. Also we have appreciated the support we have been able to give each other in this new area of ICT.

At the same time as developing our knowledge of creating web pages, using digital cameras, scanners and reading numerous handbooks we began to plan, with our headteacher, the content of the school web site. At this stage we shared our vision of the school web site with the governing body. The governors received the idea with enthusiasm seeing the potential that the web site would have in celebrating the successes of the school.

After consulting the governors and the headteacher, we decided that the main audience for whom this web site was being created was the children. It was necessary to provide a 'child-friendly' site with lots of visual material. We wanted the web site to celebrate the children's work through a different medium and to be used as a learning tool. We also wanted the web site to provide information for other audiences, such as present and prospective parents and carers. At this early stage, we sought parental permission for children's work and photographs to be used on the web site. Emphasis was placed on anonymity of all children.

Primarily, we saw the site as enhancing the children's in-school ICT provision but soon realised it would be an ideal tool to extend the home-school partnership. We have sought to gain the parents' interest in the school web site, so that the children learn in partnership with parents. We recognise that every parent or carer will not have a computer or Internet access at home. Therefore the school has made the ICT suite available to parents. There is also a computer in the foyer of the school that gives parents access to the school web site.

This is the front page of our school web site.



Each section of the web site provides opportunities for home-school partnership.

School Information

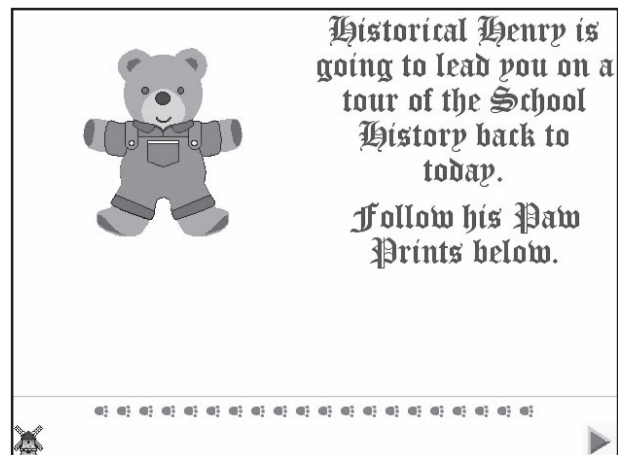
'School Information' provides the parents with a copy of the school brochure, the all important holiday dates, a school events diary and the end of term newsletters. Parents and children can see photos of the teaching and non-teaching staff and read brief details about each member of staff. This is useful for parents to show new children who their teacher will be and for children to share with relations and friends:

'Come and look at the teachers at my school, grandma.'

'I think I recognise her. I am sure she was your dad's teacher when he was at school but she looked a lot younger then.'

History of the School

This is a recently developed section that has proved to be very popular. Historical Henry (a teddy bear) leads the children on a tour through the history of the school.



This section of the web site has recently been used in a 'Time Morning' organised for Year 1 children to develop the concept of time. The parents were invited to work alongside their child. One of the activities during the 'Time Morning' was for parents (using a support sheet) to access the School History section of the web site. They worked with their child looking at the photographs and reading the information. The activity was transformed from being informative to meaningful and relevant to the children as they recognised some of the buildings in the photographs. Some parents and grandparents attended the school when it was located in a different part of the village. The children thought this was wonderful and asked them questions, for example, 'Are you in the photograph Grandad?' 'Did you



photographs and question-based text, these sections support and consolidate classroom activities.

To ensure that all parents have the opportunity to share this work with their child, they are invited (through a newsletter) to come in and use the school computers. We have found that if parents are unable to attend they usually make arrangements for another family member, child minder or friend to come in their place. Ten minutes at the start of the day seems to be the ideal time to incorporate this shared activity. A small group of children work with an adult each day. The use of support sheets has enabled this activity to have minimal teacher involvement thus allowing the teacher to focus on the rest of the class. Parents have

wear braces to school? The adults enjoyed it too as some of the old photographs brought back school day memories.

A day in the life of . . .

‘A Day in the Life of’ shows parents and children what a typical day is like at school. It is more visual than the school prospectus as it contains photographs and examples of children’s work. We are hoping to develop this section further by the use of a newly purchased video camera to capture short clips of the children in school. This is the section we particularly recommend to prospective parents to look at with their child.



How many people do you think would be able to travel in a bubble car?

Do you think a bubble car would be able to go very fast?

Why do you think it was called a bubble car?

appreciated this shared time, as they are able to spend quality time with their child, looking at stimulating and interesting information.



Arriving at School

We walk to school with our mum, dad, a carer or a friend. We enter the school by a door close to our own year unit. We remember to bring our book bags. We wear our school uniform which consists of a green sweatshirt or cardigan with the school logo on it. Our book bags also have the school logo on them. It has a windmill on it because there is a windmill in the village of Waltham.

Under the Topic section there is a link to <http://www.learning-lincs.com>, an Internet site which has enabled the children to take part in global educational projects. The projects are linked to the school topic cycle. The children have collected and recorded data using downloadable worksheets. They have been able to compare their data collection results with those from schools around the world. Through participating in such Internet projects, topic work has been

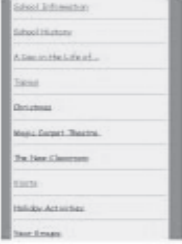
Topics and visits

These sections of the web site relate to educational visits the children have made and topics they have been involved in at school. Through the use of

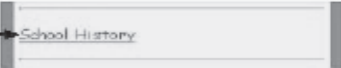
enhanced and enriched by the use of another teaching style. It has allowed ICT skills to be taught in context, thereby adding meaning to the learning process. It has developed home-school links, as children have been able to share the project with those at home.

www.leasinfants.ne-lincs.sch.uk

On the school website page find →




Click on →



and read all about the history of the Leas Infants School.

When you have finished click on →



to go back to the front page of the school website.

An example of a support sheet.

Current interests

There are some sections of the web site that are pertinent to the school at a particular time and are therefore located on the front page of the web site for easy access. These sections give every parent the opportunity to share and celebrate school activities. The sections will change as one event supersedes another. For example, we are having a new classroom built and its progress can be monitored in 'The New Classroom'. There is a section related to classroom topic displays which is updated termly.

Holiday activities

The development of this area of the web site is ongoing with new activities being added each time the web site is updated. The activities are in the form of printable worksheets that combine text and graphics to make them visually attractive to the children.

The worksheets support classroom based activities. They provide the children with access to 'Homework' presented in another media format. The content of the worksheet is either numeracy, literacy

or topic linked. Differentiation of the content and style of the worksheets enables all the children to use them at their own level. Some are designed for adult and child to use together.

Year groups

This section developed in response to frequently asked questions from parents concerning numeracy and literacy. For example, it contains a list of the 150 high frequency words which children are expected to know at the end of Year 2.

Conclusion

The seed has grown and flourished into a school web site that is being used and celebrated by children, parents and teachers. Although originally we thought of the web site as being mainly for the children, we now recognise the value it can have in fostering home-school partnerships.

These partnerships do not just happen. They need to be initiated and nurtured by the staff through invitations to parents to work alongside their children in school. The parents' role in supporting their child's learning also needs to be valued. We have seen that these partnerships create an excellent working environment. It allows children



The New Classroom

A new classroom is being built. It will link with Blue Class and the Hall.

Orange classroom is being extended and Orange and Blue toilets are being doubled in size.

Find out here how the building work is progressing.

to have one-to-one attention from their parent and take part in well planned, purposeful activities – two key ingredients to ensuring maximum potential is gained from a learning situation. It's like having a class full of teachers, one for each child! What more could a class teacher ask for? Every child is on task as he or she is being guided by intrigued parents through the activities. The conversation that can be heard is that of an excited buzz of activity related chat.

We now identify opportunities for home-school partnership activities in our ICT planning. Through regular updating and evaluating of the content of the web site, we hope to ensure a continuing enthusiasm for the use of the web site by children, parents and staff.