

# Lead the way



Coordinating a school's ICT strategy can be a daunting prospect. Lynn Roberts offers advice on making the most of what technology has to offer...

Coordinating ICT is a double-edged responsibility. On the one side ICT has been heralded as the catalyst for change in education, 'blowing up the school' and transforming learning beyond recognition. Yet at the same time, schools still operate in ways pretty much identical to those of 50 years ago, long before the first BBC Micros made their way into the classroom.

It can feel somewhat alarming to find yourself as a subject leader for ICT – you might just be expected to move the 'Victorian' school into the 21st century, creating an innovative, personalised system that leads to more socially equitable educational outcomes for all.

As if transforming education were not in itself too big a task, there is the added complication of working out exactly what an ICT subject leader should be prioritising.

There are four key areas to consider:

- ICT as a subject in its own right, with key skills to be taught in relation to the National Curriculum – whichever version of it passes into legislation over the next few months.
- ICT that is embedded across all subject areas, with the need to support other coordinators in working out the best ways to achieve links.
- ICT as a means of communication between home and school, whether through the use of the school website, VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) or the use of Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, wikis and podcasts.
- ICT infrastructure within the school – how purchasing decisions are made and resources are supported

It may be reassuring to realise that no one has yet worked out the secret to transforming education through the use of technology, and whilst the areas listed above may seem vast,

engaging with elements of each can have a real impact on learners in the school community – whether children, staff or parents. It is undoubtedly an exciting time to be an ICT coordinator. Whether you are new to the post or well established, there are real possibilities for developing learning in your school. The shake up of the existing curriculum provides a space to address issues as a whole staff and enable discussions to take place that support you in working out the priorities.

One good place to start the process might be to ask the children in your school their opinion. In the 'Learners and technology 7–11' project carried out by a team from the IOE's London Knowledge Lab, children were

asked about their experience of technology at home and school. An easily replicable activity from the project would be to ask your pupils to draw pictures of what they would like to see happening with ICT in school. The pictures would give an immediately accessible source of information as well as providing the basis for some interesting discussions, and it would be just as useful to carry out a similar activity with members of staff.

## A team effort

In a school, it helps if an understanding is developed of what ICT could and should look like – but you do not have to facilitate this alone; talk to the senior leadership team and see if a staff meeting could be set aside for ICT development. Make use of change management resources already out there – as part of the remodelling process, the TDA has put together a set of tools to support problem solving and action planning. Have a look at [www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/managingchange/tools.aspx](http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/managingchange/tools.aspx) – even if at first glance

it seems a bit too official, the 'Five Whys' is a great way to develop your understanding of an issue as a team, such as 'why is our VLE not being used?' (The answer might not be obvious, and it could turn out that some things would be better carried out using other applications.) Then, once issues have been clarified, the 'Brown Paper Planning' really does help to work out ways forward.

Gillian Bratley, advisory teacher for ICT in Barking and Dagenham, suggests that what she really appreciates in the Local Authority's ICT subject leaders is enthusiasm and interest. If you need to reignite your ICT spark, try something new in your own teaching. Take a risk and see what happens. Set it up as an experiment for yourself – one that might succeed or might fail – but regard either as a valuable outcome. You could even write it up as a piece of action research to share.

## Online options

New technology is constantly evolving, and while this is one of the difficulties in creating a relevant and current curriculum, it's also the big advantage; it's hard to be bored. If you haven't seen 'Scratch', a programming language developed by the 'Lifelong Kindergarten' team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, have a look at <http://scratch.mit.edu>. It's a free download which allows you to create your own interactive stories, animations, games, music and art and then to share your creations on the web. Or have a look at 'Voicethread', which is the Web 2.0 version of Photostory <http://voicethread.com/#home>.

## Small steps

In taking responsibility for ICT, you might not be able to transform the education system, but you can transform the learning of the children in your school. It is the small changes to the curriculum that make a difference to young learners – find out about their experiences outside of the classroom and acknowledge those skills and interests in the curriculum you create. Most importantly, take time to notice your successes; celebrate and share them with your own support network, both within and beyond the school, and develop ways forward by building on those existing achievements.

## Expand your knowledge

THE IOE OFFERS A NUMBER OF COURSES DESIGNED TO INFORM THE USE OF ICT IN THE CLASSROOM. WHY NOT CONSIDER:

### THE MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF ICT

Date: 11th October 2010

Ref: DC005-10A1

### THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OF ICT

Date: 16th November 2010

Ref: DC002-10A1

### ICT FOR SUBJECT LEADERS

Date: Autumn Term 2010 (3-day course)

Ref: SC271-10A1

To find out more visit [www.ioe.ac.uk](http://www.ioe.ac.uk), or email [cpd@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:cpd@ioe.ac.uk)

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