

Case Study

School statistics

Number of children: **106**
 Number of teachers: **5**
 (4 full time equivalent)
 Number of classes: **4**



Building a tailored solution for Essendon CofE School... ...delivering ICT directly to children

Bringing learning into the 21st century

When Rod Woodhouse was appointed Headmaster of Essendon Church of England (VC) Primary School in 1999, he inherited a less than satisfactory ICT environment consisting of 3 old PCs described as dust covered at best!

As a priority, but with minimal funds available, an ICT area was put together, based on the existing equipment, and some creative carpentry using re-cycled kitchen units.

As the school development plan gathered momentum (and old PC equipment started to fail), updating the ICT environment became an urgent requirement. Rod attended the Better Education Technology show - BETT 2004. Here, he acquainted himself with key ICT suppliers to the industry and approached them with the challenge of building an ICT environment to deliver what the school was looking for.

Finding someone to listen

Key to the process was the fact that the school staff were not ICT specialists. Rod was looking for a supplier who had experience in the educational environment and who could advise him as to what he really needed in order to deliver effective ICT to support the learning process.

Rod's experience in this process was that most suppliers tried to 'prescribe him' an 'off the shelf' solution. He recalls, "they all

had a standard product set, which didn't take our individual needs into account".

"All except Leverstock that is" he says. "Leverstock took a completely different approach and seemed keen to listen to what we were trying to achieve. They recommended a tailored package that met and exceeded our initial needs."

Best of both worlds

The resulting solution enabled the school to take maximum advantage of all the technologies available to them. Rod says "we estimate that 20% of our pupils have no access to ICT at home. We wanted to use laptops because we felt it was important to take the computers directly to the children, giving them 'one-on-one' access and really integrating the resource into the learning process. At the same time, we knew that terminals in the ICT area still had an important part to play, providing 'instant access' to groups of children whenever laptops were already in use elsewhere."

Interactive learning

Another major feature of the new solution was the inclusion of 'Interactive Whiteboards'. "A combination of a PC, a digital projector and a touch-sensitive screen turns a Whiteboard into a very large computer screen" says Rod. With a pointer, or even a finger, staff and children can write on the board or control

computer programs. Interactive boards are ideal for whole class teaching as they remove the need to have large groups huddled around a single computer screen.

The technology is extremely flexible. The screen can be used to display not only computer software to a class but, web pages and videos, whether on DVD, VHS or CD-ROM. Rod says "I watched staff using the Interactive Whiteboards to bring the story of the Great Fire of London to life using a cartoon, on screen. This kind of tool uniquely enhances children's understanding, learning and enjoyment."

"Leverstock Associates were the only supplier who really seemed to listen to what we wanted - they offered us a purpose built, tailored solution."



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Joint funding

"Leverstock also advised us on efficient ways to fund the solution" says Rod. "Using a combination of down payment and leasing, we managed to fund considerably more than we originally set out to purchase." Funding for the down payment came from multiple sources including the schools PTA, Electronic Learning Credits and Devolved Formula Capital. An extremely cost effective leasing solution, recommended by Leverstock, sees ongoing funds coming from the schools budget.

In action

Essendon use the ICT solution in a variety of ways. Rod explains "we use a range of software - much of it recommended to us by Leverstock using their experience of educational software. They provide hands on training and post training support materials enabling us to gain the most from each of the applications that we have invested in."

Laptops are booked out for lessons in advance. Typically, pupils have one laptop each, although the younger years may use one computer between 2. Class work can be very effectively maximised using the Interactive Whiteboards and other group work can be carried out when required, within the ICT suite.

"With the Leverstock solution, we have been able to extend pupils use of ICT, embedding it right across the curriculum" says Rod.

Teachers also have laptops, which they can use for their ongoing development. They are able to continually explore new applications as they become available and investigate new curriculum support. Rod says, "it is not only the children who are benefiting from the new systems. We are moving towards a 'paperless environment' and our teachers have become much more confident, not only in ICT as a resource for learning, but also in development of their own ICT skills and experience. Put simply, the solution has enhanced the teaching and learning experience almost immeasurably."

Long term benefit

"Without doubt, the Leverstock solution has enhanced our school" says Rod. "The children benefit enormously every day, as the technology changes the way in which we teach them. But more than this, our staff feel that the technology enriches teaching capabilities and careers. In addition, the parents are extremely impressed with our infrastructure, and the reputation of the school is enhanced as we go forward."

Preferred partner

When asked why use Leverstock? Rod explains "I've already talked about the fact that they listened and were prepared to build a solution just for us. We also liked that they provided us with a total package, hardware, software, consultancy, installation, training and even carpentry."

The solution at Essendon has been up and running since the start of the September term 2004 and Rod says "Leverstock continue to provide exactly what we need. Their support and speed of response is superb and their training is excellent." He adds, "as we grow and develop the installation, Leverstock has that rare breed of trainer - ex-teachers, who understand ICT and speak plain English. We very much see Leverstock services as part of our long-term development plan for our staff."



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