



PERINS STUDENT LAPTOP SCHEME PROGRESS REPORT MAY 2010



Lorna Thompson: BECTA Consultant

“HAVING MY OWN LAPTOP HAS ALLOWS ME TO DO THINGS WHEN I NEED TO, IT’S JUST SO EASY TO ORGANISE MY WORK AND KEEP IN TOUCH WITH MY FRIENDS AND MY TEACHERS. IT’S REALLY HARD TO IMAGINE NOT WORKING IN THIS WAY NOW,”



THIS report has been commissioned by the school as part of a wide reaching examination into the impact of the student laptop project. Nottingham University are undertaking comprehensive research into the impact on standards of achievement and this report aims to provide qualitative information gathered through interviews with parents, staff and students from each of the three year groups involved in the project.

The’ laptop for students’ project began in September 2007 as part of a move towards transforming learning and providing a curriculum for 21st century citizens. Anytime anywhere access to ICT set out to:

1. improve student confidence and independence, enabling them to be co-constructors in their learning,
2. give pupils choice, increasing motivation and engagement
3. provide opportunities to collaborate, encouraging local, national and international links,
4. provide a 21st century curriculum, making the best use of technology for learning
5. make personalisation real, ensuring that all students have equal access both within and beyond the school.

Everyone at Perins sees ICT as a high priority and recognises its prominence in today’s society. Creating opportunities for students to develop high ICT capability and maximising the use of ICT within and beyond the school is central to their vision. Students cite the use of personal devices and the ‘Moodle’ learning platform as significant factors in helping them to gain very high levels of achievement across all areas of learning and imperative for entry into the world of work and study beyond Perins School.

REPORT FINDINGS:



SUMMARY

Everyone is very positive about the impact of the laptop project. It is clear that the use of a personal device is significantly contributing to motivation, interest, and enjoyment in learning. Staff and students choose where and when to use ICT, personal learning programmes are universally accessible and ICT is effectively used to enhance learning opportunities.

In addition to the direct use of ICT within their learning, laptop use enables teachers and students to communicate seamlessly, conversations about learning carry on beyond the classroom and beyond the school day. Email and Moodle are well used, all students have virtually 'on demand' support and are able to seek clarification from teachers and peers in a safe and secure environment. Staff and students see this as a major factor in high achievement and confidence.

Generally parents are very positive about the laptop project, they recognise the importance of ICT skills in the 21st century and want their children to have the best life chances. A few have concerns about the demise of traditional skills and identify that many of their worries stem from the fact that "it's not like when we were at school".



STUDENT VIEWS

Students are very open and honest and clearly remember their initial expectations which they identify have been met and in many cases exceeded. They are very clear about the impact of having their own laptop, they have many examples of how it has opened their minds to personal learning preferences and how they learn best. They believe they have greater knowledge, a broader range of skills, a deeper understanding, more confidence in their capabilities and a more positive attitude to learning. They say having their own laptop enables them to:

1. Access a broad range of information when they feel it is appropriate.
2. Consolidate and strengthen learning and make it personal to their needs and give the example where a member of the maths staff use the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate examples which are then saved and uploaded to the learning platform for further use.
3. Refine and edit their work immediately. Many examples were given about use of the laptop on long journeys to school which helped to productively pass time and in many cases make significant improvement to their work.
4. work uninterrupted and in their own time. A Year 8 student identified that they have two siblings at home and “as I have my own laptop it is really helpful. I don’t have to share and I can use it where and when I want”

All students identify that the use of a personal laptop helps them learn more effectively and whilst recognising that many have computers at home, the use of their personal device means that they continue their learning seamlessly. They see access to web based information and the learning platform as an invaluable support to extend and consolidate their learning. They say their friends at other schools are envious as they “don’t have their own laptops to use, they have to share home computers with other family members - this is much better!”

THEY are clear about how the laptops impact on the way they learn:

1. Increased staff use of for lesson delivery
The planned use of laptops makes lessons more interesting. Teachers plan activities which offer a wide range of resources and often give pupils a choice about what to use. They particularly like the use of photography and video, they see this as a powerful tool to enhance their learning and like the use of programmes such as movie maker. The increased use of media resources for modern foreign language teaching enables them to have a greater understanding of the language and culture.
2. Increased independence and personalisation
Students are able to work at their own pace and make choices about presentational genres. They say they feel very ‘grown up’ when they work in this way and see this work as a key to their future success. They are particularly keen on the transformational learning days and enjoy making choices about the direction of

their studies and identify that they “learn more work related skills which gives us better work prospects in the future”.

3. Better Communication with teachers

Students regularly email teachers to seek reassurance or clarification about their work. Having their own laptop enables them to access this support wherever or whenever it is required. They particularly welcome the fact that their teachers are accessible beyond the school day (weekends evenings and school holidays) and grateful that despite personal and family commitment they always try to get back to students within a reasonable time. They see this as a very efficient way of communicating and hugely supportive.

4. Increased motivation and learning power

Everyone identifies how much they enjoy using the laptops for homework and class work. Students particularly like the chance to submit work and receive teacher feedback online. They say that coupled with the school's use of Moodle this really makes a difference to learning beyond the school. They like being able to access all their work some hosted on the school servers and some on their laptop hard drives and say that it is “easy to catch up if you are away or not able to attend lessons for any reason”

5. Helping with parent conversations.

Most students see the use of laptops as a good way to share work with parents. They really like the opportunity to prepare their work for ‘one to one’ review days. They like creating personal presentations which allow them to demonstrate their ICT skills as well as their learning targets, progress and achievement. Using the laptop for preparation is seen as a great improvement giving them opportunities to:

- a. think and plan over a protracted time period
- b. make it very personal and appropriate to their personal situation, reflect their strengths and their development areas
- c. be responsive, instantly able to make changes, adaptations and amendments.

Students acknowledge that their personal ICT skills in many cases are higher than those of their parents and there is some degree of ‘smug satisfaction’ in this. However, they realise that sometimes it is hard for their parents to follow what they are doing and many say they support their parents to learn ICT skills. They know that the school offer parent training sessions but say it is hard to persuade their parents to attend. A few humorous comments made everyone laugh . . .

“My mum could do with a lesson on the laptop!”

“My mum wouldn’t allow me to teach her . . . it’s just the principle . . .”

Students have been involved in the evaluation process for the last two years and say that the school continues to act upon their recommendations. Current concerns which the

school is working on generally relate to the appearance and weight of the laptop. Some of the comments:

1. "I accept that the cases are safe and secure but I don't like the cases, too heavy, not fashionable and don't fit into the school bag easily."
2. "I would like a mouse as the touch pad is a bit hard to use sometimes"
3. "Some of the firewalls are over protective. I know we have to be safe but it would be useful to get to some things like YouTube for additional research and information. We do know how to use these things sensibly and we use them at home"



PARENT VIEWS

All parents see their children engaged in work at home and say how much their children enjoy using the laptop, in fact sometimes they say "it's hard to stop them working". The introduction of the general information and the ILP onto Moodle is a huge support and infinitely better than relying on paper copies of letters brought home by their child. They like the fact that they can see what their child is doing and welcome the opportunity to find out more about:

1. school activities and events
2. their child's work programmes including homework and coursework
3. their child's achievement, targets and progress.

Parents feel their children have high ICT skills and see them using a wide range of applications to support learning. Some have older children and say that their skills are not as advanced as their child who is involved in the laptop project. They identify that using the laptops has:

1. increased their child's independence, they access more online information and maintain regular contact their teachers through email which means they ask less questions of their parents,
2. increased their child's confidence, they speak with conviction about their work
3. increased their child's motivation to complete work, they like working on the laptop and see it a very mature way of working

Parents ICT skills vary and whilst many are confidence users of technology, some know their children's skills are greater than their own. This project has been an inspiration for many to update or take on new learning themselves. All parents are aware that the school runs courses for parents and those who attend say they are encouraging and very helpful. As the laptop project has developed many parents can see the need for the courses and say they will attend in the future.

Generally, parents know the use of the laptop helps their child's learning. They accept this is the way things are going to be in the future and say this is "the world we work in these are essential skills". They recognise that their children are completely at ease with new technologies and say that "this is how their lives will be". However they have a few concerns and insecurities:

1. As laptops can be used anywhere in the home, in some cases it has been hard to supervise and manage. Their child wants to work in their bedroom and they are not sure that this is appropriate and there are some safeguarding concerns.
2. The natural demise of 'traditional skills' such as handwriting, spelling and grammar. Parents see the increased use of laptops as detrimental. They feel that exams still rely on traditional skills and there is a concern where a child has found these hard in the past.
3. Although recognising independent learning is an essential attribute, the lack of knowledge about what their child is submitting for homework is a concern for many parents. Their children work independently and submit work online and many are unsure how to access their child's work. They would like to see the work before their child submits it and again following the teachers marking and comments. Many parents said they found speaking with their child about their work much easier when it was done in an exercised book and they could clearly see teachers marking and comments.
4. A parent of a child with learning and organisational difficulties would have welcomed some additional support at the beginning of the programme as her child still struggles with file structure and locating work.



STAFF VIEWS

Staff views are overwhelmingly positive. “ICT is now integral to what we do and we can’t do the job without it”. The use of the laptops coupled with the use of Moodle enables learning to continue beyond lessons. All students, even those who are ill and away from school are able to make the best use of online resources to further their learning. All monitoring evidence points to the fact that ICT is a major contributory factor in raising standards. The laptop scheme ensures that all students have equal opportunity to work within and beyond the school day and no student is disadvantaged through lack of ICT access.

All students at Perins School have email access to their teachers. However, the students who have laptop access use email communication with their teachers more frequently. Teachers say that they have comments and questions from students who are reluctant to ask questions in class, they feel they have a deeper understanding of individual students and therefore are more able to address personal learning needs accurately. Students with laptops are more likely to submit their work online, teachers mark online and return work to students electronically. This increased online communication keeps staff and students in close contact and ensures learning is well supported at all times. Student learning continued through the prolonged period of closure this winter due to snow. Teacher - student communication continued and there was minimal disruption to learning. Staff welcome this close communication, they like to be supportive of their students and feel that this is to be encouraged. They say that “communication with my students is much improved. They enjoy emailing and asking questions and this has had an impact on learning. Some students are more inclined to ask questions this way as they feel less threatened using email.”

Many staff and students have very high ICT capability and a wide range of skills. The laptop project means that it is possible to exploit these to support learning. As all students now have ICT access on demand and teachers are able to plan to use these skills in teaching, learning and curriculum delivery. Resources are tailored to individual needs and students work at an appropriate pace. The range of software packages, web based learning programmes and revision activities have enabled individual learning programmes to be designed.

Staff value the training provided and the willingness to share practice is widespread. Lead ICT staff support individual and group needs and much time is invested in making best use of Moodle. Many teachers identify the school’s use of ICT as a major factor in them applying to work at Perins School and it is certainly a major reason for them not moving on.

All staff identify the laptop project as transformational, changing the way teachers teach and learners learn. They say how motivating it is both for themselves and their students and the use of new technologies and innovative ways of working are “really exciting”. There is a strong feeling that access to the wider world and other cultures leads to a greater sense of global understanding and global citizenship. Learners have the direct involvement in the design of their learning pathway and relative freedom to pursue their preferred learning style. The broadening of knowledge and understanding is seen as a

major factor in the consistent rise in standards of achievement. Staff say that the laptop project enables them to plan work programmes which are “more interactive and more interesting. This is about transformation, being brave about the future”

NATIONAL WORK IN THIS AREA:

The findings of this report concur with those of the national report “The Impact of Mobile learning” carried out by Jill Attewell, Carol Savill-Smith and Rebecca Douch. The MoLeNET project is an extensive piece of work covering schools and colleges throughout the country and looked into the way that using portable mobile technologies supported learning and teaching. In summary the research shows that pupils, staff and institutions benefit in the following ways:

FOR STUDENTS:

1. Increased engagement and motivation to learn, increased learning activity away from school
2. Improved progress and achievement for all learners, including increased work completion, work rates, assessment levels and attainment
3. Improved personalisation, more independent learning more personalised curriculum tailored to the needs of individual students
4. More enjoyment in learning and more confidence in skills and capabilities
5. With older students, more learning in the workplace, more collaboration, more access to learning materials

FOR STAFF:

1. Increased teaching opportunities
2. Increased skills and confidence
3. Improved communication between staff and students

FOR INSTITUTIONS:

1. Increased awareness and interest in learning
2. Improved infrastructure, resources and skills base
3. More highly developed e-learning strategy
4. Raising the profile of the college
5. Improved collaboration between schools and other organisations involved on the learning of their students



IN CONCLUSION

Perins School is viewed as a leader in the ICT education field and many local and national stakeholders look to this project as exemplary practice. It is clear that the laptop project is making a significant impact on many aspects of schools life. It has enabled twenty first century teaching, learning and curriculum design offering students a wide range of exciting opportunities which encourage learning. The schools reputation for pushing the boundaries of ICT and pushing the boundaries of learning is clearly visible and it is very apparent that the Headteacher and staff team have a shared sense of vision and purpose. This project is part of an extensive strategy which embraces the contribution of ICT to new ways of learning and provides the very best chance for Perins students to be successful 21st century citizens.

“THE LAPTOP SCHEME IS EMPOWERING THE KIDS, IT’S MAKING THEM RESPONSIBLE, GIVING THEM POWER AND CONFIDENCE. IT’S KITTING THEM OUT FOR THE FUTURE”

Lorna Thompson May 2010.

BIOGRAPHY: LORNA THOMPSON

Having been a successful teacher and head teacher in schools around the Country, Lorna has been working with Becta on various projects relating to the use of ICT to support school improvement. Currently she is working with school leaders, partner organisations and local authorities in London on BSF delivery and continues to work around the country on 'Parental Engagement'.

Lorna is a lead assessor for the ICT Mark and a strong advocate for the 'Next Generation Learning Charter'. She strongly supports the use of the self-review framework for school improvement and sees the ICT Mark as an invaluable affirmation of quality provision and delivery. Having been the core judge for the ICT Excellence Awards for the last five years, Lorna has extensive knowledge about effective leadership and leading edge practice across the full range of main stream primary, secondary and special schools as well as successful local authority strategies. She has led Becta's 'Leading Leaders Network' for two years and continues to support leading edge practice. Her knowledge of national policy, schools and ICT is well respected amongst the school and business community.

Lorna is well known for her careful and insightful consideration of the adoption and use of ICT, renowned for her networking and supporting school leaders. She has her own view about learning, the contribution technology makes to support all learner needs and sees ICT as a powerful enabler for parents, learners and the school.



METHODOLOGY

Lorna visited the school on 2 occasions. On the first day she met with the Senior Management team, Students from Y7/8/9 who were a mixture of notebook owners and non notebook owners, a mixture of Staff who were using e-learning in their lessons and the e-learning, and ICT Department. In the evening she rang a number of parents whose children were part of the scheme.

On the second day Lorna came back to meet with more teachers and undertake some more 1:1 interviews. She was able to compile her findings through a mix of observations, 1:1 interviews, group discussions, and telephone interviews.

If you would like to contact Lorna Thompson for more information on the study you can e-mail her at: lornajthompson@googlemail.com