

ICT-in-Education - impact scenario

2 – Five times the help for pupils via email

Abstract – After the launch of the school’s learning platform Anna Dwyer at St John the Baptist School found she started to receive around 5 times the number of emails from pupils seeking help with their work, compared to the period before the launch of the learning platform.

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Level of impact – offers unique opportunities (transformative).

Impact on who? -Student/staff/whole-school/parents/

Particularly relevant issues – None, could equally apply in the majority of schools.

Scenario – The school had for some years made the RM EasyMail email system available to pupils, enabling them to email their teachers. Anna Dwyer was receiving around one or two emails a week from her ICT class, seeking help with work.

During 2009 the school installed a Frog learning platform and put great effort into making it an engaging place for the students, with many sections of the platform provided for such things as online debates and extra-curricular areas, in addition to its use to support classwork and out-of-class work. As use of the learning platform grew during Autumn 2009, Anna started to receive more emails from her class seeking help with their work. By January 2010 she was receiving around two or three emails a day, instead of the previous one or two a week.

Anna had not made any change to the arrangements by which pupils could email her for help. Prior to the launch of the learning platform they could log on to the school’s network from home and then access the RM EasyMail, in order to send emails to her. Anna speculated that the reason for the increase of emails was that access to the email system had been made easier through the learning platform, and that pupils were accessing the learning platform for many reasons including fun and social engagement with other pupils. As they were online to the platform their own intrinsic reasons sending an email to her had become something that they did not have to take separate steps to do, making it easier.

Previous approach – Prior to the school’s use of RM Easymail to enable pupils to contact their teachers, the only way pupils could have asked questions of their teacher between classes would have been to take the time and effort to find them in school. This would have been likely to be at a time when teachers were busy with other things so replies would have been short.

Use of RM Easymail then created the ability for the teachers who agreed use of this with their class to receive questions during their marking and lesson preparation time. This had become accepted practice for at least some of the pupils and the volume of emails had reached one or two a week.

Quantification – Two or three emails a day amounts to an average of 7.5 emails a week, compared to the average of 1.5 per week previously. This is five times the number of email conversations through which the teacher is providing out-of-class

help to the pupils.

There is also an issue about the quality of help that teachers provide to pupils via email. Because the previous alternative would have been to provide help only if a pupil found them in school during a break, the quality of the response from the teacher to the pupil can be higher. Teachers could also arrange to answer questions about homework on certain days or evenings, enabling them to deal with several queries from pupils at the same time. This could make the process more efficient for the teacher, and as several pupils might have the same misunderstandings, enable the teacher to spend longer in creating the answer, further raising the quality of response.

Case Study/Full Description – tbc

Caveats – none – any school could do this. Concerns about inappropriate emailing between pupils and teachers can be dealt with by making it clear to all that personal emails and inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and that all emails are recorded and can be looked at if there is an issue. Concerns about this potentially adding to teachers' workload have been addressed by teachers like Anna discovering that a small amount of time answering pupils' emails has positive impacts on things like behaviour in class and on quality of work produced which eases marking and makes it more pleasurable.

New skills (teachers and pupils) inc SEAL and PLTS - tbc

Other evidence already available - tbc

Next steps in quantifying the impact - tbc

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Keywords - tbc

Date – This impact study was created in November 2010, from a conversation in January 2010.