

CASE STUDY

Established in 1950, South Molton College is a mixed school catering for 600 students aged 11 – 16 year olds. Keen to introduce tablet technology, the school went in search of a company who could provide the necessary training to ensure this went as smoothly as possible. Paul Berry, assistant vice principal, and head of geography, shares the school's experience of working with New Ways to Learn.

As a senior leader, I'm responsible for overseeing all of the teaching and learning in the school. A few years ago we realised we were spoon feeding students too much and since then we've had a whole school push to find ways to give them a more independence in their studies; introducing tablet technology really fitted the bill.

I've got a personal interest in tablet technology and as head of geography, after using iPads in my teaching I have seen that they can have a real impact on learning. I've become conscious this past year or two that, without meaning to, we've almost created a divide between home and school. Many of the students have tablet devices at home that they use as part of their day-to-day lives and are almost downgrading when they come to school - unable to use this technology as an effective study aid. It's so important schools keep pace with what's out there in terms of new educational technologies, so I decided to introduce a class set of 34 tablets that I could then effectively 'sell' to the rest of the staff. Having spent a year or so developing the plan, in March 2013 I was recommended New Ways to Learn through a contact the school had with a telecommunications system company we were working with at the time.

The thing that impressed me the most about New Ways to Learn was that they were able to offer the school a whole package. Having organised the purchasing for the initial set of iPads for us, New Ways to Learn's managing director, Sanjesh Sharma and head of learning innovations, Matt Buxton came to the school personally; they handled the technical configuration of the devices so that they would interface with our wireless system and introduced a management system that gave our ICT manager the ability to control the full set. The technical set up was half the battle for us and is what I think puts off a lot of schools from implementing tablet technology, so it was a huge help when this was handled for us. What's more, I know the team are only a phone call away and we can really rely on them for ongoing support.

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After the initial set up stage, Sanjesh and Matt ran a great hands-on iPad training session with staff so that they could make full use of the devices. We handpicked a selection of early adopters for this and they fed back to their faculties.

We've had two full sessions to date and whilst I certainly wouldn't rule out any further training, the expert guidance and advice we were given has meant I now feel comfortable taking on a proportion of the training. I think when you have a school with really good intentions but not as much expertise, the support that New Ways to Learn offers is ideal. Sanjesh can very quickly capture educators' imaginations with what tablet technology can do in terms of teaching and learning.

We're not quite there yet with a whole school iPad scheme as it's going to be a huge expense to the school. However, since starting with one shared set of iPads, we're now buying more sets for different faculties as teachers' confidence and competence in using these grows. For a rural Devonshire school I'm really happy with that.

The training with New Ways to Learn has certainly stimulated staff in terms of what's possible with iPads. For me personally, after the training sessions my brain began filling with ideas as to how to use the devices across the school in different subject areas. A lot of the younger staff in particular who have grown up using technology have really embraced the training too. Our PE department for example have really gone to town, filming students in activities and getting them to review their serves, kicks, shots etc. leading to instant improvement. The modern languages department are also using the iPads to record students as part of peer assessment which has proved very successful.

As teachers continue to use iPads as part of teaching, this has had a very positive effect on students. In fact, many have installed some of the educational software used on the class iPads onto their own devices for study purposes.

New Ways to Learn would always be my first stop for further training. Since we began using iPads in school, I've had three local schools come in to see what we're doing and have recommended New Ways to Learn to each of them.