

## CASE STUDY

Before participating in this pilot programme, both Whitley Chapel Primary School in Hexham and East Stanley Primary School in Durham were familiar with visual learning and mind mapping techniques. Previous experiences in the classroom of these approaches included:

- Post it note organisation of ideas
- Paper based 'brainstorming' using flipcharts
- Interactive whiteboard work for large groups of children

With increasing access to tablet computers and the higher levels of engagement that they offer pupils, both schools were keen to evaluate Inspiration Maps and its application in the classroom.

Whitley Chapel School in Hexham is a small rural school with a widely dispersed catchment and a small teaching staff. Teachers are required to be masters of all subjects and be adaptable in their approach. The pupils are motivated and eager consumers of learning and are not strangers to technology. The school has identified a process to raise standards which includes the provision of iPads and the associated staff training and is now very keen to use apps which will improve overall teaching and learning.

East Stanley Primary School in Durham is a medium sized Primary School in a small town. They have a strong commitment to using ICT, not just as a subject, but integrated into teaching and learning. The staff is mainly young and familiar with a wide range of applications and technologies. They are open to new approaches and have made significant investment into iPad provision and wish to expand this further. In both school cases there were two main drivers for their interest in evaluating Inspiration Maps:

- **Raising Standards** – This is a clear agenda for all schools who are keen to evaluate tools which will contribute positively to pupil progress.
- **Usage of Provision** – Investment has been made by both schools into the provision of tablets for classroom use by pupils and East Stanley Primary School were attempting to build a further funding case in order to provide sufficient

tablets for a whole year group. Tablets have evolved from being regarded as ICT kit into essential learning tools.

Four specific examples from observations and interviews of how Inspiration Maps provided a solution:

### 1. Story Planning and Creation

Schools appreciated the cross-curricular application of the software; however both schools found it especially easy to use during Literacy with benefits particularly evident in creative writing. Inspiration Maps enabled the pupils to make webs to plan and define the events in their story and then order them by dragging and repositioning as their story evolved. The pupils were then able to connect character images to key events.

### 2. Character Development

An interesting application for the software was the creation of a classic fairy story where a location and the characters were chosen from the software library then given names and character traits such as 'evil', 'good', 'generous' or 'cowardly'. Connectors were then created to identify which characters possessed which traits. This was seen as a useful tool, but more powerful was the option to mix up the process by changing the trait attribution so that characters swapped traits, enabling a lively discussion on the impact that it might have on the story.

### 3. Book Reviews

These assessments are traditionally achieved by pupils writing comments about a book that they have just read against a set of agreed criteria. These would include generic headings such as plot, character, setting and recommendations and this was found to be an application that translated well for using the app. Using Inspiration Maps is more visual and quick to access which resulted in pupil reactions being more positive with a higher likelihood of producing better results. The app allowed pupils to order, rearrange and add their own sub-sections or

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main headings and once complete could be translated into a text document for reference, a function which was appreciated by teachers.

#### **4. E-Safety**

The ability to make a presentation or display materials was well understood by pupils and teachers, and the software was seen as very useful in the creation of some e-Safety guidance which could be expanded and developed over time.

The 4 main outcomes of the pilot through observations and interviews with teachers and students at both schools:

##### **1. Ease of Use**

A key feature of the app was that staff perceived it as being very easy to use. The physical process of using Inspiration Maps in terms of creating webs, adding symbols, connecting events, labelling and adding notes was simple and straightforward and this ease of use allowed the staff to fully appreciate its potential application across a wide range of curriculum contexts.

##### **2. Learning Curve**

Teachers all commented on how quickly pupils responded to the app with pupils discovering the features by simply looking to see what was there. The role of the pupil 'expert' was exploited to help spread understanding, but in the main classes took to the software very quickly, exploring for themselves and pushing the functionality to be able to apply their ideas.

##### **3. Curriculum Application**

Following the purchase and adoption of tablets in the classroom, teachers and pupils often only have access to a limited range of free or bundled apps supplied with the tablet. Schools with often a very limited budget for the provision of software in class are looking for apps that can be used across a wide spectrum of the curriculum and hence offer the greatest value for money. Inspiration Maps was found to have clear

cross-curricular applications and was therefore met with favour by teachers.

#### **4. Built-in Resources and Flexibility**

Inspiration Maps comes with a large range of built-in resources in the form of a large library of clipart suitable for most requirements which are ready to use instantly in the classroom, a benefit acknowledged by both teachers and pupils. One school using the app in literacy found that it was the clipart that led and informed their choices when creating the characters for their stories. The professional images enabled all the pupils to create a visually appealing and engaging piece of work without the need for external resources.

Following on from their initial use, pupils explored the app further in order to find images outside of the clipart library and as soon as one pupil had found out how to import, this knowledge was shared rapidly around the classroom. Import options include:

- Paste
- Camera import
- Third party create and import

Whilst the majority of the work observed took place at a visual level, it was also noted by the pupils that the text pane (flipside) had a number of uses and was beneficial for recording notes at the start of a project before turning over to the graphic side. Additionally, it provided a useful summary check, where if it made sense in the textual view at the end, it was probably a well-structured piece of work.

Teachers from both schools were very positive about the Inspiration Maps app and would recommend it to other schools and colleagues. Pupil response was very good and was driven by the perceived flexibility and ease of use of the software. One pupil said "It's really easy to see what you are doing and find out how to do things." Self-learning, peer tutoring and exploration are valued in the classroom and this app services these areas very well.