

Herts for Learning Chromebooks / G Suite 2018 Case study

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Chromebooks / G Suite

Summary of impact and outcomes

Context

Herts for Learning (HfL) has been working with staff, parents and pupils at John F Kennedy Catholic School (JFK) in Hemel Hempstead, to provide Chromebooks for all children starting in September 2018.

Brief description

John F Kennedy Catholic School (JFK) is a maintained secondary school in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire. The school wanted to be able to support students' learning by providing them with 21st century digital tools, which would be available any time, any place and enable collaboration and workflow in a safe, secure online environment. With ever increasing pressure on school budgets, the challenge was to be able to offer this in a cost effective way whilst still expanding and modernising their ICT (information and communications technology) provision and supporting their vision of becoming a flagship school in the use of cross-curricular technology.

After extensive research, the school decided that Chromebooks and Google's G Suite for Education cloud-based platform would provide the solution to meet their educational needs, as well as save them money, and they set out to trial these with a group of staff and students.

JFK asked several companies to bid to support this project, before choosing HfL as their supplier. HfL has a wealth of experience in schools' ICT, from both a teaching, learning and technical / infrastructure perspective, and is a Google for Education Partner. This, alongside their not-for-profit ethos and Google certified trainers and technical staff, made them the right choice for the school.

Chromebooks are devices similar to normal laptops, except that they run the Chrome operating system, and access programs and files from the cloud. This means they are fast to start up, they have a long battery life and they can be managed from a central, online portal. Pupils can log into any Chromebook, using their own G Suite for Education accounts, to access their own work and the suite of tools available to them

Project delivery

Before putting the Chromebooks into the hands of students and staff, it was essential to make sure the technical infrastructure was in place to support the additional Wi-Fi and broadband demands. HfL implemented various upgrades and deployed the cloud-based G Suite for Education platform, creating Google user accounts from their Management Information System (MIS), linked to their Windows system, so that users could use the same log-on credentials for both Chromebooks and laptops/PCs. The new system means software and files are accessible on any device. It also provides the highest level of eSafety

and security, including internet filtering and email monitoring, whether used at school or at home.

A programme of staff training was then provided by HfL, where teachers gained hands-on experience of using Chromebooks and the G Suite apps, including Google Classroom, through which they would be able to manage digital classroom activities and homework.

Of equal importance, HfL advisers spent time leading practice sessions with the students, so that they became familiar with using the devices and cloud-based platform, and they learned how to access and carry out their work through G Suite. They also discussed being responsible users of this online environment in preparation for taking the Chromebooks home.

Whether at home, school or anywhere else, the Chromebooks at JFK have the benefit of filtered internet access and additional alerting and reporting tools. Lewis Richardson, Head of Technology Services at Herts for Learning, said using the new technology is “extending the learning experience outside the classroom with all the security of being in the classroom.”

Impact and outcomes

The Chromebook trial with JFK teachers and groups of students from years 7 and 8 has been highly successful.. Through moving to Chromebooks, students and staff have access to a lightweight, touch-screen device that starts up in under ten seconds, with a battery life that easily lasts a whole school day, even with heavy use. G Suite for Education provides unlimited file storage, which is accessible from any online device, and a range of programs for productivity, communication and collaboration. By having these tools available to them whenever they need them, students are becoming more independent in their learning, and are excited to use these modern tools for their school work, as their positive feedback from the trial testified.

The school has also saved money by moving in this direction, as typically, Chromebook devices are of lower cost than Windows laptops, and the G Suite for Education platform itself is free.

JFK engaged with parents and carers from an early stage in the trial, clearly outlining to them the envisaged benefits of embracing this technology.

With Chromebooks, teachers find it easier to test students’ knowledge and then meet their individual needs, often giving out unique and tailored assignments to different students in a single classroom.

Feedback from project participants

Steve Jump, Assistant Headteacher at John F Kennedy Catholic School, said: “The aim of using Chromebooks at JFK has always been to ensure students have the opportunity to use IT in all lessons in an engaging and interactive way. Herts for Learning have been an integral

part of our plans and have helped us to transform the way our students learn in the classroom.”

- **Everything gets easier**

Chromebooks makes the lives of students and teachers at JFK dramatically easier in many small but meaningful ways, from sharing files to recording video to saving all work to Google Classroom. Geography teacher Mrs Barton explains that "students quickly got into the habit of connecting with their Classroom as soon as they arrived at my lessons and were able to get on with work without delay."

- **Engaging Practice**

Mrs Kolka was looking for ways to help students in her Year 7 RE class work more autonomously. "Students love using Chromebooks. They are more engaged in lessons and able to work far more independently" Time in class is now spent more productively, enabling Mrs Kolka to spend more time engaging with students individually and in small groups.

- **Snow days**

Lost productivity due to snow days are a thing of the past for JFK. Mr Jump, Assistant Headteacher advised that “during snow days the school can maintain some sense of normalcy.” Teachers and students can access all of their work, share files, and collaborate whether snowed in or not.

- **Learning gets personal**

With Chromebooks, teachers find it easier to test students’ knowledge and then meet their individual needs. Art teacher Mrs Miller explained that "there was an improvement in the written work and reflective skills of the students compared to when they write comments in their books. They were more thoughtful about the comments and advice they were giving and more reflective on their own work."

Roll out of devices

With the continued support of HfL, JFK School began its journey of rolling out Chromebooks to all students, in stages, through largely parent-funded devices. This started with the new cohort of 180 year 7 students, in September 2018. It is anticipated that JFK will continue with the rolling out of parent-funded devices to other year groups.

JFK is a shining example of a school wanting to enter the 21st Century technologically and find tools to make learning easier for teachers and students. The biggest challenge was to offer this in a cost-effective way that supported their vision of becoming a flagship school in the use of cross curricular technology.

JFK chose to work in partnership with HfL to help deliver their vision. As a certified Google Partner HfL understood the importance of taking time to fully appreciate the individual requirements of staff, students and parents to ensure the best-fit products were sourced and provide outstanding staff training and support from Google certified trainers and technical staff.

Further information

For more information about the Herts for Learning **Chromebook and G Suite** services please contact Lewis Richardson lewis.richardson@hertsforlearning.co.uk

For details on our wider training and consultancy services please visit hertsforlearning.co.uk

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