

The Royal Grammar School

Using a parental contribution scheme to enhance independent learning

When The Royal Grammar School wanted to improve pupils' independent learning, they decided to train their tech-savvy staff on iPad in order to put more resources at their fingertips and encourage more individual engagement. A year after our e7 team helped them roll out a 1:1 scheme, we caught up with their iPad champions to find out how things were progressing...

Scoping out the project with staff

"We'd been using a VLE for about three or four years, and we'd done a survey and found that all the staff were using the VLE for things like small tests, getting children to submit work and discuss things in forums," explained Assistant Head Dawn Booth, "so we were aware that we were using technology in quite a number of varied ways already, and we wanted to extend that."

The school had also carried out a student survey that had shown "one thing that stood out as a learning need was more independent learning, and the need for boys to take control of their own learning." Using tablets seemed like the ideal way to combine these two goals, so Dawn, IT Manager Varsha Kirkby and Assistant Head Eric Wolton set up a working group with 18 of their keenest members of staff.

"We purchased ten Android devices and ten iPad," Varsha told us. "We asked all the teachers to [use different devices and] update us on the apps available in each market. The feedback was that iPad had a lot more educational content available, they were much easier to use, the screens were much more comfortable." With the winner clear, the school set out to research the best way to fund and roll out their iPad deployment.



Working with...



In a nutshell...

Who are they?

The Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe is a selective Academy for boys aged 11-18. As well as achieving some sterling GCSE and A Level results, the school has developed its own ethos of learning, designed to prepare their students for learning beyond the classroom.

What did they need?

A parental contribution scheme to help them roll out an iPad 1:1 scheme to Year 8 boys.

How did we help?

Starting from the ground up, we helped the school train staff, ensure pupils' safety online and get parents and governors on board with the scheme. We then provided a secure purchasing portal for parents, and helped the school's IT team configure and deploy all 400 devices.

What were the benefits?

- Increased collaboration between staff.
- Access to IT resources at desk at any time – not just when the computer lab is free!
- Access to a huge range of new teaching and learning materials.
- Increased engagement from pupils.
- Improved independent learning.



Cementing key skills with training

“When we set out on this we wanted to be quite astute and to choose a team that would suit what we wanted,” Dawn explained when we asked about the school’s tender process. “And I think from the first time we met our education manager at Jigsaw24, he just impressed us so much. His knowledge, his quiet confidence and his wisdom, his experience was just brilliant. So that encouraged us to explore Jigsaw24 a bit more. It’s not a partnership we’ve blindly followed; for the second year of iPad deployment we looked around again, but we came back to the decision that Jigsaw24 was right for us.”

One of the first tasks set for us by The Royal Grammar School was to get their staff comfortable using iPad. Although the school planned to roll out their 1:1 scheme to boys in a single year group, Dawn explained that “we were keen that all the teachers would have iPad [and] develop their skills”.

However, Eric told us: “The staff reaction was as mixed as the members of staff are. So we went from one extreme – the extremely sceptical ‘I’m not going anywhere near those devices’ – right the way through to staff that couldn’t wait to get their hands on their iPad. But we were aware that you needed more than enthusiasm, so we had to build in a teacher training and support programme.

“The first thing we did was identify the enthusiastic and [technologically] skillful teachers, and we used them to support the rest , so we had a couple of Apple experts on the staff who are available at certain lunchtimes for any teacher that has questions. We then put in place a number of CPD training sessions with the trainers at Jigsaw24.

“We had a two-hour CPD session for every teacher, where they could ask all their questions because we were in small groups, and they were able to develop their skills on particular apps. That’s something we’re looking to develop – so far we’ve had two sessions delivered by Jigsaw24, which we have then built on with some in-school training and support, and we can now go back and use their experts to develop further.”

Jigsaw24 also helped provide technical training for IT staff, which, Varsha noted, “we really needed, as we’re basically a Microsoft school. The technical support were very, very helpful and the e7 team were always there for us – they helped us configure all 400 iPad with the Apple Configurator, which was quite a lot of work, they helped us find an MDM and web filtering solution [and work out] how to create a safe environment for pupils while they’re at school, to block the apps that we needed to block.”

“We have found Jigsaw24 to be a very helpful partner. The whole process is one that is fraught with pitfalls, and having a partner that is prepared to be there for you, to offer you advice, to come in and help to resolve issues, to help provide training for teachers, to be there at meetings for parents, is fantastic. You wouldn’t really be able to do this without having such a supportive partner.”

**Eric Wolton, Assistant Head and Biology Teacher,
The Royal Grammar School.**



Securing parental engagement - and contributions

Although the staff training had gone well, there was still one major obstacle to overcome: getting parents on board with a financial contribution scheme, in which they'd purchase their child's iPad on behalf of the school.

"It isn't something you do lightly as a school," said Dawn "but we knew this was something we wouldn't be able to fund beyond helping parents who didn't think they'd be able to fund it themselves. And I think when you're going to parents saying 'you've bought the school uniform, you've bought the rugby kit, now buy this,' you are very cautious, you're anxious. But we were very fortunate that the parents did listen, they were open to it, and we've had massive support from them."

One of the key measures the school took was to run sessions for parents because, as Dawn explained, "they'd have more opportunity to ask questions. We'd never done a launch day like that before, so we were really relying on Jigsaw24 to help us, and the fact that straight away they were able to give us a typical agenda was very helpful. So we worked with them for about a month preparing those evenings, and the very fact that I think we had three, four members of staff at Jigsaw24 on hand, presenting and answering questions at those launch evenings, was incredibly reassuring."

Once the parental support was in place, the school worked with Jigsaw24 team to build a branded ordering portal. This would allow parents to select and securely contribute towards devices and accessories from a school-approved list. We then configured and delivered their orders, with minimal admin on RGS's part.

Delivering more engaging independent learning

Ultimately, however, it's all about results. So, is iPad paying off? "The number one thing that came back from the boys was enthusiasm," said Dawn. "They've been really, really motivated. With staff I think there are loads of things that have been beneficial – they've particularly mentioned how they can access learning more quickly, more effectively and on a more individualised basis, which is a great enhancement."

Eric added: "I would certainly recommend the use of iPad in schools, not just from a biology teacher's perspective where it opens up a fabulous range of resources and engages the pupils quickly, but also from a learning skills perspective. We have an ethos of learning here for our pupils – we're trying to prepare them for learning beyond school and I think that we'll be helping our boys for when they leave school the more comfortable they get using iPad."



The Royal Grammar School recommend...



Showbie – a VLE-style app that lets you blend video, animation, and documents into a lesson plan for students to follow. They can then submit homework through Showbie, and you can annotate their work or record verbal feedback over the top of it.



Socrative – an interactive quizzing app that's great for plenary exercises and exit quizzes.

“We were looking for a partner who would offer us a complete solution in terms of training our teachers, training our students, portal purchasing, leasing and insurance schemes, and Jigsaw24 offered us that.”

Varsha Kirkby, IT Manager, The Royal Grammar School.

For more information about starting your own parental contribution scheme, get in touch with our e7 team on the details below.