

> TOSHIBA TABLET PCS BENCHMARK A NEW ERA FOR SCHOOL STARTERS' EDUCATION

In the modern world, you would find it hard to come across a school which doesn't use some form of IT in education, whether it is through the use of interactive whiteboards, or even art and design classes.

Henleaze Infant School in Bristol however, has taken the use of IT in the classroom one step further.

Alongside the traditional pen and paper approach, pupils at the school have now started using Toshiba's state of the art tablet notebook PC's to help children aged between four and six, to learn to write.



> STRUGGLING TO PUT PEN TO PAPER

This innovative approach to education was taken after the school staff noticed that the standard of handwriting amongst the boys was inhibiting their learning across the curriculum. Whilst the girls were progressing fairly quickly, learning how to hold a pen correctly and writing letters and words clearly, some boys were struggling to keep up. Gradually, there was an obvious divide between male and female pupils.

Henleaze Infant school was introduced to Toshiba's tablet PC through the Bristol Senior Schools IT Officer, Paul Hiscox. Being a member of the Toshiba Ambassador Programme, Paul was able to attend regular meetings with other Toshiba ambassadors to share the latest technology available for education.

Seeing the advantage that these Tablet PCs could bring, Paul advised the ICT co-ordinators at Henleaze Infant School to introduce them to their classrooms to address the divide between the boys and the girls.

The teachers at the school knew the children loved learning through technology as they all showed a great deal of enthusiasm when using the school's IT suite. However the suite also threw in a number of restrictions, such as time-table clashes and immobility.

Toshiba's new tablet PCs provided the mobility and flexibility needed by the school, but more importantly; it brought on a whole new dimension to learning.



> PAPER FREE CLASS ROOMS?

Toshiba's M400 tablet PC is not like an ordinary laptop. It features a rotating screen that folds down flat to become an electronic notepad. Using a digital stylus just like a pen, children can write, colour, draw and sketch directly onto the screen as if it's an endless supply of paper.

"Part of me was slightly wary about introducing this type of technology into the classroom, as I was worried some of the children would find a tablet PC unfamiliar or difficult to use" said Mrs Levy, reception teacher and joint ICT co-ordinator.

"In fact, it has been completely the opposite. Both the boys and the girls really love being able to interact with the tablet PC in such a hands on manner. Seeing their handwriting on the screen makes them incredibly enthusiastic about using the tablet PCs to develop their fine motor skills, because it is different and exciting. In fact, the children are always disappointed when their turn is up!

"The teachers don't need to worry about learning to use the technology either. Our account manager at Toshiba supplied us with a very detailed instruction manual for the tablet PCs and we can also call her to ask for help at any time."

The Microsoft Windows Journal software that comes pre-installed with Toshiba's tablet PCs is ideal for an education environment. Using the digital stylus, which is shaped just like a pen, the children see instant results. They can then save their work after each session, enabling teachers to keep a record of the child's handwriting over a period of time. It also enables children to convert their handwritten words into text using Microsoft Word, which reveals any incorrectly-formed letters, words or sentences.

"One little boy in my class was particularly far behind the other pupils. He couldn't manage to hold a pen correctly, so his written work was very poor", said Mrs Gibson, year one teacher and joint ICT co-ordinator. "However, once we introduced him to the digital stylus, his enthusiasm grew and

because he enjoyed using the tablet so much, he learnt how to hold the pen and write correctly on the screen within a few sessions."

Mrs Levy and Mrs Gibson also noted that using the tablet PCs has really taught the children a sense of ownership from a young age. "They are very diligent about ensuring the tablets are looked after properly and treat them with much more respect than their paper books and pens."

> SHARING THE FUN

Currently, the school has eight Toshiba Portégé M400's which are mainly used in a foundation class and year one class. However, due to the popularity and success of the tablet PCs, Henleaze Infant School is considering purchasing more notebooks, so that every pupil at the school has a chance to experience this new and exciting way of learning.

Not only will older pupils be able to practice their handwriting technique, but teachers at the school will also be able to enhance the children's learning by using the tablet as a whiteboard. By connecting the tablet to a projector, the teacher can write notes and draw diagrams for the whole class to see.

"It is outstanding to see the difference Toshiba's tablet PCs have made to the children's learning," said Pat Jones, Head Teacher at Henleaze Infant School. "There are numerous examples of pupils struggling to pick up the correct writing style or to even concentrate for long periods of time on improving their handwriting. Using this type of technology has really engaged the children and has provided a solution to a very important learning curve in a child's life."

