

St Fintina's Post Primary School



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Pupils and the Principal of St Fintina's school using the Fizzbook Spin

Challenge

To maintain and increase student numbers in the face of intense competition from larger neighbouring second-level schools.

Solution

The school introduced the Fizzbook Spin tablet pc which comes complete with SMART Classroom Suite software and EDCO e-books.

Benefits

Students have become more engaged with curriculum content which is invaluable in student group work and project work.

St Fintina's Post-Primary school is a small rural, co-educational, non-denominational school situated in Longwood, Co. Meath with 200 students ranging in ages from 12 years to 18 years. Notwithstanding its size, the school offers students a broad and balanced curriculum which is supplemented by extensive extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes.

According to the school principal Tom Stack, "One of the main challenges for the school is to maintain and increase student numbers in the face of intense competition from larger neighbouring second-level schools with more modern accommodation facilities. In order to remain competitive, we decided to introduce one-to-one computing." Following a school-based demonstration of the capabilities of the Fizzbook Spin by Steljes personnel, the school was convinced that this was the most suitable personal device on the market for students. "Personally, I was impressed with its flexibility and toughness, yet it was compact and lightweight which would appeal to students," says Tom, "The fact that this device is a tablet as well as a netbook attracted my attention, because the potential it provides to enhance the learning for students, not alone in the classroom but also outside of the classroom environment."

Currently the school has sixty Fizzbook Spins and aims to double that number during the next academic year. The Principal notes "The introduction of the Fizzbook Spin, as a personal device, has facilitated students to have a more hands-on approach and become more engaged with curriculum content. Learning has become more varied and consequently more fun for students." The Fizzbook Spins have seven EDCO e-books loaded on them with ancillary digital resources and capabilities. For example students can navigate pages by dragging, highlight important material, link pages with associated topics plus make personal notes and save them. The Fizzbook 10.1" screen is sufficiently large enough for reading text clearly, plus its touch screen allows students to navigate through material quickly with their fingertips. A very nice feature is the built-in accelerometer which rotates the screen in tablet mode so that it is always the correct way up for right-hand and left-hand users.

Some of the teachers allow students to use the 1.3 mega pixel built-in webcam to record certain aspects of their lessons to assist them in completing homework assignments. For field work and out of classroom assignments the Fizzbook has been a tremendous asset to students for making notes and recording their thoughts even in unfavourable conditions. The handwriting

recognition feature helps them to present their notes in a coherent and legible manner for further work back in the classroom. Students also use the rotational webcam to record important features of such outings or to record their own thoughts in the course of the trip. In Mr Stack's opinion "Students are deriving more educational benefit from co-curricular activities as a result of being able to use the Fizzbook Spin in this way." The use of the Fizzbook Spin is proving to be invaluable in student group work and project work. Students can work individually and then share their work easily with other members of the group by just spinning the screen in their direction. Group discussions can also be recorded for analysis at a later date. The Fizzbook allows students to present their findings in a variety of different ways that best suits their individual style such as a presentation, in written format, orally or in video format etc.

One of the most exciting features of the Fizzbook Spin, from a teaching point of view, is that the device is preloaded with the SMART Classroom Suite. This software allows the teacher to monitor all the devices in a room and to take control of an individual Fizzbook at any stage from his/her own desktop. The screen can be blanked out if the student has been using the device inappropriately or a message can be sent requesting him/her to get back on task. Likewise the teacher can send differentiated lessons to targeted students who in turn can work on a specific activity and then send it back to

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Mr Stack, School Principal

the teacher for assessment. This is a very useful feature in a mixed ability setting where students, with special educational needs, could be discreetly given assignments which would be more appropriate to their ability levels. This software also affords the teacher the ability to take control of a student's work and project it up on the screen either as a model answer or as a focus for a group discussion.

“The Fizzbook's are revolutionising the way teachers are interacting with their students in the classroom which has enhanced both the

quality of teaching and the quality of learning in the school,” explains Mr Stack, “The school is fortunate to have a very dedicated teaching staff who embraced this technology in the firm belief that it is making a significant difference to the quality of the education being delivered in the classroom. Huge gratitude is due to the parents of our children who have committed to purchasing these devices for their children, even in financially challenging circumstances, and who have been extremely supportive of this project.”

