CASE STUDY

Bishop Challoner Catholic College – Self Maintainer Programme

Introduction

Bishop Challoner Catholic College is a highly successful training school based in Kings Heath, Birmingham. The dedication of the staff has resulted in the school being recognised nationally for its academic as well as sporting achievement and the staff regularly seek ways to improve learning, in particular through the use of technology.

Bishop Challoner runs a not-for-profit eLearning scheme to ensure that all pupils have access to a laptop, no matter what their socio-economic background may be. The scheme runs on parental contributions and the school works with the Birmingham eLearning Foundation (BeLF) to keep it running.

Students are encouraged to use technology in lessons throughout the school, but particularly at Key Stage 3 level to enhance their learning experience. With over 1,000 devices in use by pupils at the college, the IT staff previously had to spend a large amount of time maintaining and repairing these devices as a result of day-to-day wear and tear.

The requirements

The college initially spoke with Toshiba to try to overcome issues of mounting insurance costs for the eLearning scheme. If devices ever needed to be sent away for repair, the college previously had to wait approximately six weeks to get them back, as the devices were maintained by an external party. This was having an impact on the students' studies, meaning the college had to invest in additional devices whilst the originals were being repaired.

Andy Baker, Director of ICT and Innovation at Bishop Challoner said, "eLearning has been a really active scheme which is an integral part of learning for the students who use their devices at school, at home and on school trips. The cost of repairs was mounting and we were considering pulling the plug on the scheme because of this."

As a result of these rising costs, Bishop Challoner needed to see if there was a way of keeping the pupils equipped with the latest technology to help facilitate teaching and learning, while keeping expenditure to a minimum.

The solution

Following an in depth consultation with Bishop Challoner, Toshiba's education experts suggested its Self Maintainer programme as the perfect solution. The Self

Maintainer programme is unique to Toshiba and allows schools to take control of their own IT repairs, helping to dramatically cut insurance and maintenance costs.

Before implementing the programme, Toshiba arranged for the Bishop Challoner team to visit another school that already had the Self Maintainer programme in action. Bishop Challoner teachers and IT staff could then see exactly how the scheme worked and envisage how they could implement it in their own college. But with such a large number of devices, Bishop Challoner would need more than just their two IT technicians to handle this. Toshiba worked with the college to create a bespoke programme that would work for them; the idea was formed for sixth form students to get involved in the day-to-day maintenance and repair of devices as well.

This addition to the scheme was appealing to the college due to the life skills and added technology expertise the students could gain. Students applied for the positions with formal job applications, stating what they could offer in terms of skill sets and why they wanted to take on the role. The school recruited 12 technicians from each sixth form year. The pupils then attended a two day course with Toshiba's repair experts, where they learnt how to repair and maintain the devices. The students are paid for the work they do on a timetable basis, and are seen as 'digital leaders' in the school. Crucially, their involvement in the scheme also adds value to their UCAS applications, as participants receive an accreditation for their involvement in the programme. In addition, students have the opportunity of promotion to Senior Technicians, where they can gain valuable management experience by leading and assisting the new engineers. Although the IT team oversees the scheme, it is very much run by the students, who gain inventory management experience by keeping track of the devices and their repair status, and maintain all the devices themselves.

The school provides a range of devices to the students, but tries to ensure that all the devices are the same spec, so as to give all students the same advantage. Bishop Challoner currently has four different Toshiba device models, including the NB10t with a touchscreen, which the student technicians are able to manage and maintain. The Toshiba devices were selected due to their reliability; however students are also able to conduct any repairs necessary caused by general wear and tear.

The results so far

The Self Maintainer scheme is now in its third year at Bishop Challoner and as well as the clear financial benefits, the scheme has been extremely positive for the students, helping teach invaluable life skills and increased IT skills. From the school's perspective, the scheme is also a great way to encourage students to stay on for sixth form as they realise the unique opportunity of learning these additional skills at the same time as studying for A Levels.

Two of the students that have taken part in the Self Maintainer programme have commented on how the accreditation has been a great support to their applications to study computer science at Warwick University.

Andy Baker continued, "Since implementing the Self Maintainer Programme, our overhead costs have been cut down dramatically and the waiting time for device repairs has gone down from weeks to one to two days. If we didn't have the programme, our eLearning scheme wouldn't have survived. We continue to keep an eye out for alternative deals from IT suppliers, but Toshiba always comes out on top with the added benefit of the Self Maintainer Programme, which no other company offers."

The future

Due to the great success of the programme and its popularity with students, (over 45 pupils applied this year) the college plans to continue the scheme and open it to sixth form students next year. The netbook technician staff have also been filming the laptop repairs including stripping the devices right down, repairing each element and then rebuilding the netbook. This video will then be used for training the new technicians.

In addition to this, the college is now looking at how they can support the wider community by maintaining Toshiba devices for local primary schools that may have insufficient funds.