



# Implementing BYOD/BYOT at Tideway School, Newhaven

Christina Preston and Jim Fanning

2015

## Summary of context

Tideway is an 11-16 secondary school that serves Newhaven town and nearby coastal communities in East Sussex. It is a school of 600 students, whose specialism is technology. The new school buildings were opened in 2009, students and staff having spent the previous four years in temporary accommodation due to a devastating fire in 2005.

This specialist technology college is situated in an area of deprivation and low aspiration. The staff are disappointed by the 2012. Ofsted inspection that reflects the good conduct of students but puts the school in the 'requires improvement' category because of the achievement and leadership and management grades. Literacy is a key area for improvement. However, although the fire has been a factor in this judgment, hope springs from the new spirit of collaboration engendered in the whole school involvement in the design for the new building. This has been a good example of collaborative work that the school would like to promote.

## Overview of the school

This mixed secondary state school with 700 pupils is in an area of deprivation in a coastal town (Figures One and Two). The new building completed in 2009 after a 2005 fire promotes the technology specialism. The 2012 OFSTED inspection reflects good conduct, but judges the school 'requires improvement' because of the achievement, leadership and management grades. Literacy is a key area for improvement.

## ICT infrastructure and resources

The vision is to use technology in innovative and exciting ways despite financial constraints and wifi access problems in the new building. Student to computer ratio 3:1. Three network staff support 5 PC suites. There are IWBs and computers in each room. Some departments have sets of devices as well. The intranet is widely used inside and outside school for administration and personal planning. Every room is wifi enabled, but the costs of a complete service have prevented full installation until 2013.

The SLT has been working towards independent learning over five years with early work focusing on effective use of the VLE from outside school by staff and pupils: student

planners and mail to parents are existing services. BYOD/BYOT is the next step. Pupils usually bring Smart phones or tablets. Currently those who can use their parents' Hotspot in school until full school wifi is secured. The number of staff with devices is growing. Humanities, Maths, Music, Design and Technology now have sets of wifi enabled devices that can be used to supplement BYOD/BYOT for those who do not have their own device.

## **Overview of work/activity/project**

The vision for independent learning over the last five years is led by an SLT member who has a Ph.D in technology and learning based on researching school practice in this school and others and keeps updated through membership of informal online teaching communities and online courses. His academic leanings and sensitive approach to change are important in ensuring that the project will eventually impact on teaching and learning and will be embedded effectively in staff administration and contact with parents as well. The requirement for autonomy in learning became urgent after the original school was burnt down. For many months the students had to learn from home by accessing the Virtual Learning Environment that has been used in a sophisticated way forced by need. It became clear in the last two years that a BYOT/BYOD policy might be a key driver in further embedding independent learning in the school.

Although devices are now being widely used, mainly Smartphones, they are still officially banned in the school policies. Some teachers still discourage their use because of their own lack of training and uncertainty about the benefits. In contrast, pupils' journals show that for some the device is a constant source of information and interaction although teachers are not always aware how pervasive they are, or why (Figure Three). Pupils who use them in class admit that they are not always on task – reading emails and accessing Face Book are cited in this context. Pupils in this deprived catchment area also have concerns that their peers are very conscious of the comparative costs of devices and describe the discomfort not only of those pupils who have no device but those who have a less expensive, 'less cool' device. This BYOT/BYOD research pilot that runs alongside expanded use of the devices in the school was carefully planned to provide evidence to drive the new teaching and learning framework being prepared.

A growing number of staff with tablets have also been using them to experiment with administrative task like taking registers, planning lessons on the bus and improving their immediate access to statistics on specific pupils (Figure Four). Pilots have been conducted in departments who expressed a specific need for a BYOT/BYOD intervention in the expectation that some of these experiments will attract the interest of staff who have not yet committed to the use of devices in their classrooms (Figures Five, Six and Seven). **Impact**

## **Impact**

In the three areas that the well-planned pilot was focusing on some outcomes have been achieved.

1. Firstly in terms of organization the school is now in the process of finalising an updated policy for the use of mobile devices in school. Based on teachers' and pupils' observations in the pilot a teaching and learning framework that supports the use of devices is emerging, but currently this is quite limited. Staff plan to widen

involvement and share insights in order to ensure the richness of this document. The timescale envisaged is about another year.

2. Secondly progress has been made, particularly through the survey, in ensuring that all members of the school community are aware of the benefits and issues relating to BYOT/BYOD, although it is the enthusiasts at this point who are making progress in developing a code of conduct to be discussed with the community as the next stage. Pupils and parents will be included in this process.
3. The third aim, to provide hard evidence of the impacts of BYOT/BYOT on teaching and learning, is not well advanced yet although the details of this study provide a vehicle for further discussion and research. The pupils and the teachers can provide convincing anecdotal evidence that changes in performance, engagement, motivation and behaviours have taken place. More systematic action research now need to take place to confirm that BYOT/BYOT can impact on learning outcomes as well. This will provide detail for the teaching and learning framework that is being developed for staff. Pilot staff are already enthusiastic about the major impact on their lesson preparation time because they can use the tablets in transit: administrative tasks like registration are easier; ease of use in classrooms because of significant time savings over the use of PCs.

## **Key Lessons Learnt**

Working slowly and inclusively in pilot mode has insured high expectation of success in full implementation over the next year. Some key points have arisen for inclusion in the emerging policies:

- Research into ownership was essential in planning the pilot and also in engaging staff, pupils and parents. Ownership of devices at 38% was lower than expected and has slowed up progress. Provision must be developed for students and staff who cannot fund their own device;
- Currently some staff still ban the use of devices in their classrooms despite changing policy. According to the pupils more staff need their own devices and specific training in order to ensure a new teaching and learning policy is embedded. Pupils have offered to teach the teachers informally;
- Wifi is essential through the school if take-up of BYOD/BYOT is to be improved. An affordable solution has now been found but the absence of overall wifi in the pilot was a barrier to change;
- Pupils using their own hotspots where wifi is not available has raised concerns about how the school will control what websites pupils are accessing;
- The SLT needs to trial more thoroughly key online administrative and teaching software as poor performance dampened enthusiasm for the pilot amongst staff and pupils.