

Case Study

Sacred Heart School, Redcar & Cleveland



Poetry and podcasting: a hit at Sacred Heart

Sacred Heart RC Comprehensive is a 750-pupil mixed secondary school situated in Redcar and Cleveland. With an eclectic mix of attendees from many different backgrounds, teachers at the school work hard to provide innovative and exciting ways of engaging pupils across all areas of the curriculum.

The concept of podcasting in the classroom was first discussed after the school became a participant in a DFES pilot project looking specifically at teaching English and ICT. During an initial session, podcasting was mentioned as a tool that could help facilitate the project and the school became interested in the technology. The project was a collaborative exercise with another local comprehensive school.

'An excellent way to improve articulation...'

Becky Bowater an English teacher at the school, takes up the story, "Typically our students' language is littered with local dialect and colloquialisms, which understandably, impedes speaking and listening. We saw podcasting as an excellent medium that could help get students more in tune with their articulation."

The idea was for students to improve their analysis of poetry and begin to recognise the importance of the spoken word as part of a KS3-4 transition module.

The heart of the activity



Once introduced to Podium, a PC-based application that enables users to create, edit, publish and promote podcasts all from the same simple interface, the school began a project with some Year 9 students that encouraged the discussion of poetry. Becky explains, "*We used Podium because it was so simple to get to grips with, which meant we could focus on the heart of the activity and not get wrapped up in how to use the technology.*"

The teachers set about teaching the students how to use the software before beginning the project. "*All it took was a quick 20 minute session where we used one computer and a main screen to run through Podium's features. We asked the students to guess what each icon did and how to use it - it*

was so simple they got it almost straight away. We then had an hour's break for them to think about what they wanted to do and then got cracking!" comments Becky.

Since the project has been running, the school has noticed a number of benefits, such as increased self-esteem and a vast improvement in how students convey their ideas and thoughts. Becky explains, *"Unfortunately for our students the project was talking about poetry and they neither enjoyed poetry or speaking out in class! Podcasting really brought them out of themselves; there was initially a lot of laughing at each other when we played the podcasts back, but we could stop them and ask 'what are you laughing at?' which encouraged creative criticism within the group. The pupils, including the boys, all became more enthused about poetry."*



One major feature of Podium that was particularly appropriate for this project was its scripting tool, which allows users to input a script either directly or which is copied and pasted from elsewhere. Students are also able to assign text and colour code it, so that when they are rehearsing or recording their podcast, everyone knows when it is their turn to speak.

Becky comments, "The scripting tool is excellent, especially the colour coding aspect of it. This facility enabled our students to completely draft and proofread their work before recording it and handing it in. This obviously improved the quality of their final drafts by enabling them to perfect everything. This built a noticeable rise in confidence and pride in their work."

When asked to summarise the main benefits of introducing Podium into lessons, Becky says, "Podium removes pupils' fear of talking in class and in front of other people to convey their ideas. Our pupils have become more empowered and their word choice and composition is more thorough."

In the future

With one major project successfully complete, the school now has big plans for Podium across other subject areas. It is felt particular value will be added following a media visit to New York, whereby pupils will take audio recorders and be asked to make audio diaries of their trip. These will then be converted into podcasts, creating an everlasting record of their experience to be shared with others.

The school's art department is also interested in podcasting for GCSE oral examinations and other departments are hoping to roll-out homework podcasts.

"We see a great potential for incorporating podcasting right across the curriculum and for every year group," comments Becky. *"Podium has been a real eye-opener as to how effective and simple this process can be."*

To listen to Thames Primary School's podcasts visit www.podiumpodcasting.com