



Northern Grid / BECTA Video conferencing Project

Background:

Name of school

North Road Primary
Pendleton Road
Darlington DL1 2HE

Location

Darlington is in the NE England.
Urban school close to centre of town.

Size

500 children including the lower foundation (Nursery) Unit.
20 teachers.
25 TAs/ Cass/ and other staff.

Type

Primary School - Our school has an integral Language Resource Base.

Other participants

Our eLearning ICT unit have been helping us with the setup for the early VCs which we have also found very helpful.

Equipment

We had no existing VC equipment prior to working on this project.
We do have digital cameras and video equipment to record the sessions.

Context

We saw VC as providing wonderful opportunities and an exciting medium to engage children in learning opportunities that can expand and enrich the curriculum in interesting, creative ways.
Also I have had conversations with senior officers employed by British Council who have advised me that Video-Conferencing is one of the best ways of involving many children at one given time directly on work related



to a School Project, because of their involvement within the VC learning environment.

We want all children to be actively involved in their learning, and different children learn in different ways. Many children will welcome opportunities to learn through VC. Using VC will also develop speaking and listening skills.

Additionally, my personal involvement has come about because I have a role in school to be creative. I am an AST for Primary MFL and this is another area which will offer further learning opportunities: I want to develop this.

Technical installation and set up:

Type of equipment used:

Polycom PVX videoconferencing software.

Logitech Quick Cam 5000 webcam with built in microphone .

Speakers and headsets have both been used.

PC Workstation is currently used - RM networked.

Once the system was up and running we have not had any major issues with user management.

Layout and location of video conferencing area:

Our VC setup is in a room used by groups of children with our TAs. We currently 'take over' the room for VCs by arrangement.

So far we have used only small groups of children and so we have had no problems regarding lighting, background, seating or soundproofing.

Problems encountered and solutions developed with the above:

We have had minimal installation and connection problems, apart from the Firewall protection referred to above. Our installation is fixed in on room: this means that there is minimal disruption for the system.

Initially we had been given the incorrect E164 number for contacting our school, but this was quickly corrected.

Problems - initial problems were encountered with in/out links with Firthmoor Primary. Solution was found by switching off Windows Firewall to the Workstation by ICT Technician.

No further problems have been encountered.



Video Conferencing Partners:

Who:

Our current partners are

1. Firthmoor Primary and, more recently,
2. Saltburn Primary.

We are hoping that in the future we may be able to VC with our Comenius Project partners. Our partners will obviously need access to equipment similar to the equipment we have used on this project.

Where:

Firthmoor Primary is one of our Comenius Project partners, and is also in Darlington. It therefore made perfect sense to have our first VCs with them.

We have recently had a successful VC link with Saltburn Primary. Their school approached us because staff from our school visited the rainforest region in Martinique in November on Comenius business.

Saltburn Primary is on the coast, and our Y2 children will visit Saltburn in July, on an educational visit.

We have emailed each other, and also spoken over the phone. With Firthmoor we also have frequent Comenius face-to-face meetings.

What you did:

1. With Firthmoor Primary:

After initial problems with links overcome, we contacted by dial-up. We had mobile phones available for back-up contact - very helpful.

What we did:

Trial run was Teacher to teacher. Then we had children from North Road and Firthmoor sharing their respective work involving Artwork being undertaken in each school, with each other on our Comenius School Project.



The activity allowed the children to discuss their artwork with another audience outside of school. The children asked each other questions about their work.

Later, digital images of artwork were shared between the schools thus reaching a wider audience.

What we found:

Sessions went well Teacher-Teacher, and Children-Children.

It takes some time to get used to delays experienced with sound, but no problems experienced.

Sessions were valuable for participants and onlookers. Other members of staff and children very interested in what we were doing.

Evidence:

Written notes of session built into our Comenius Project log.

2. With Saltburn

No problems with dial-up. We had mobile phones available for back-up contact - essential, a phone needs to be close at hand.

What we did:

Trial run was Teacher to teacher.

Then we had children from Saltburn and 2 Teachers from N Rd in a Q/A session related to the rainforest visited in Martinique on our Comenius School Project first visit. The questions were chosen by the children of Saltburn. They asked the questions of the Teachers.

The activity allowed the children to find answers to their questions about rainforests from the experiences of others.

Personal Portal Desktop Use:



So far we have made minimal use of this but it makes good sense to use it, and we plan to do so in the future.

What we found:

Sessions went well Teacher-Teacher, and Children-Teacher Q/A session was a valuable learning experience for all. David, my HT, and I enjoyed talking to the children immensely using this medium.

Other members of staff and children very interested in what we were doing.

No problems were experienced.

Evidence:

- Written questions prior to session.
- Video of part of session - see CD Rom

Overall conclusions from the project so far:

Positives

Great feeling to have had a successful link-up, particularly with a new VC partner!

Negatives:

Feelings of frustration when a link-up does not work.

What would you do differently if starting the project now?

It would be helpful to have more frequent VCs.

Reactions of those involved locally and remotely.



My Head Teacher loved answering the questions asked of us by the children of Saltburn Primary. He, and I, learned from the experience. We both felt very comfortable in that situation, and we all had a lot of fun, too!

Pupils

It was evident from things said, and during the VC, that they enjoyed the sessions immensely.

Future developments:

Where do you see your VC activity going in the future?

- We plan to have other VC opportunities to share ongoing Comenius Project work.
- We hope eventually to have VC links with our partner schools in France/ Spain x2/ Estonia/ Martinique. We are on Year 1 of a 3-Year Project.
- I would like very much to introduce MFL links into our VC sessions: I see great potential with this developing area of the curriculum.