



St Ambrose Primary School

Assessment made easy

The SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard is revolutionising primary school teaching. At St Ambrose's Primary School in Kidderminster, there is an interactive whiteboard in every classroom with TurningPoint® software being used to monitor pupil responses. Jane McNally, Year 5 teacher, keeps her whiteboard on for the whole school day.

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*Jane McNally, Teacher,
St Ambrose Primary School.*

Primary school children have an enormous amount of learning to absorb. At the same time, they need continuity and stimulation. Using the SMART Board in every lesson provides both of these. In the Year 5 classroom at St Ambrose's Primary School, the SMART Board is on all day, every day. “The minute it's switched on I set it to display the date and the day's learning objectives” says Jane McNally. “When they come in the children use it to self-register and mark themselves down for hot lunches, which is great because it means I'm free to concentrate on any problems or letters being handed in.”

Track topic improvement

The school is currently trialling TurningPoint® software. This provides easy-to-use technology, particularly for those already familiar with Microsoft® PowerPoint®. The teacher uses the software to create slides on the spot, quickly and easily. Each child has a keypad which they use to respond to the multiple choice questions posed by the teacher via the slides. The answers are stored, making it possible not only to monitor the individual responses of each child but also to track improvement during the course of a lesson, an entire topic or a term.

“It's got so much potential,” says Jane. “My class were inclined to be a bit inactive at the beginning of the year, but as soon as we had the interactive whiteboard they were really keen to join in and use it. One great thing about TurningPoint® is that the individual keypads make lessons interactive in an interesting way, keeping pupils on task.”

Every corner of the curriculum

Jane explains how she uses TurningPoint across the curriculum. “For instance, if we're doing rules for plurals in a literacy class, I'll make a slide with three possible answers to the plural for 'city', say – 'cities' 'citys' and a completely misspelled version. The children select their answer based on the rules we have just discussed. They don't see anyone else's answers, which means that I get a true record of each child's knowledge.”

“In maths lessons I can fulfil numeracy objectives for basic calculations, for example, by setting up slides with questions and different ways of calculating answers. It's useful for both the number line and number grid.”

"In science I might use TurningPoint to ask questions at the beginning of a topic, then again at the end to see how the children's knowledge has increased and if there are still any gaps. For PSHE I can use it to gauge their opinions and understanding of issues such as drug awareness, and see how their reasoning changes as we move through the topic."

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It's a fantastic tool for 'assessment for learning', which is a current push in our school. You can use TurningPoint across the curriculum to measure and monitor the children's progress. I think it has huge potential and it fits brilliantly with the government's drive for lessons that are appropriately tailored to every pupil's needs."

One of the features of TurningPoint is that these learning gains can be converted into graphic form that the teacher can see, or show the whole class. Graphs of pupils' answers at the beginning and at the end of a topic or lesson can be displayed side by side, making it easier for teachers to monitor and track improvement.

The live data from a question and answer session can be used immediately to split the class into ability groups, or to pair strong pupils with weaker pupils. Another option is to measure and track the responses of boys versus girls.

Giving pupils responsibility

Jane tends to use the numbered individual response mode most often. "I give each child their own special numbered keypad, which they keep in a lidded box on their desk. It saves having to give them out and collect them up each day. The children know that they are responsible for their own keypad and they mustn't fiddle with it. If the handsets do get knocked on to the floor, which inevitably happens from time to time, they need re-setting but withstand the fall."

TurningPoint can also be used in anonymous sessions. These give the children the confidence to commit to an answer without the fear of being shown up if they get it wrong. Anonymous responses also enable the teacher to see how the whole class is reacting, which can be particularly valuable when a sensitive subject is being discussed.

Jane would also like to increase the amount of time the children spend using the whiteboard themselves.

"At the moment I probably use it about 80% of the time and the pupils use it for 20%. I'm working towards a far more equal split, which is what it should be if the technology is being used to its full potential."

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*Jane McNally, Teacher,
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