

Empowering Pupils at the Microsoft IT Academy

Real Impact
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Learning



Irish schools are teaching skills for life with fit-for-purpose courses that integrate easily with the new Junior Cycle Programme.

Summary

A co-educational Carlow secondary school has embarked on IT courses that will shoehorn neatly into the 2014 launch of the Junior Cycle Programme, where a new emphasis on short courses will supplement traditional subjects to give pupils more practical life skills.

Presentation College, in Askea, was already an advocate for technology in the classroom, but science teacher and school IT advisor Claire McHugh wanted to teach IT-specific courses that would give pupils skills that would serve them well in their subsequent careers.

After exploring different options, McHugh chose the Microsoft IT Academy programme, a digital curriculum with online exams, culminating in recognised certification that shows fundamental technology skills have been mastered. "We had tried other programmes to encourage IT adoption in the school, but they were not specific enough," says McHugh. "I believe the skills we teach should give students skills for the things they are going to meet when they go out into the workplace."

"The Microsoft IT Academy is ideal because students get to do something that is going to be useful to them in their education and eventually their careers. I think it's excellent."

Claire McHugh, science teacher and school IT advisor, Presentation College



Company: Presentation College
Website: <http://www.presentation.edu/>
Country: Ireland
Industry: Primary K-12
Employees: 50

Company Profile: Presentation College is a proud CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust) school with 630 students and 45 teachers. Helping prepare students from every background and ability to make the most of life's opportunities is fundamental to the school's principles.

Solution: The school chose the digital curriculum offered through Microsoft IT Academy to enable pupils to gain recognized certification for technology skills

Software & Services:

- Microsoft IT Academy
- Microsoft Office 365
- Microsoft Sharepoint Server

Microsoft IT Academy

Microsoft IT Academy

Microsoft Education
www.microsoft.com/education
www.microsoft.com/education/schools

Customer Success Stories
For more information about other Microsoft customer successes, please visit:
www.microsoft.com/casestudies

The Full Story

Formalising Technology Skills

Presentation College is a proud CEIST (Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust) school with 630 students and 45 teachers. Helping prepare students from every background and ability to make the most of life's opportunities is fundamental to the school's principles. For today's technology-centred job market, IT Academy was identified as a way to validate core skills in Microsoft Office applications that dominate the workplace.

McHugh was aware that many students came to her classes with some competencies in Microsoft software, so it seemed an obvious next step to formalise their skills. "Because the certification comes from Microsoft, and not a third party, it makes a lot more sense for students. They get recognised accreditation on their ability to use products from the people who make them."

The IT Academy awards Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification for Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Access, OneNote, SharePoint and Office365. Mindful of the financial constraints of schools, Microsoft ensures the programme is simple and cost-effective to implement. When schools enroll they receive access to free eLearning programmes, free Microsoft software licenses, and discounts on the courseware and certification programmes.

Championing IT in Education

Having attended a Microsoft information day in Limerick, McHugh enrolled the school and began running the courses with the help of two fellow teachers. Training software comes with all the course instruction materials, adding to the teachers' IT skills and competencies, advancing their professional development at the same time as benefiting the pupils.

While many schools introduce non-curriculum technology courses as a transition year option, Presentation College introduced Microsoft IT Academy as a first year option. The school has always championed the role of IT in education: every classroom has a PC and a projector and it boasts two kitted-out computer/ technology rooms as well as a graphics/CAD learning area. Microsoft Windows 7 is the ubiquitous operating system.

Pupils who take MOS courses receive one class a week, which they supplement with their own online learning. "You can teach it to the whole class or let students work away at their own pace," said McHugh. "It's what I particularly like about MOS. Pupils undertake their own training and self-testing, but the teacher can always log in to see their scores and how they are progressing."

After logging in through the school registration code, pupils set up accounts with their own ID, giving them access to online eLearning materials as well as the tests. When students hit the required scores they are able to take the final exams facilitated by Certipoint, a web-based certification platform that partners

Microsoft for the courses. The exams take the form of online tests that typically last around 45-50 minutes.

Presentation College focuses on three core courses in PowerPoint, Word, and Excel. Pupils typically start with PowerPoint in the first year, before moving on to Word and Excel.

"The idea is that they have at least one or two certificates by the time they start looking for work experience as part of their transition year programme," explained McHugh.

Others pupils start the courses from scratch in fourth year while those that have passed their MOS exams have the option of pursuing the Office Expert Certification in fifth year, taking their Word and Excel skills to a higher level.

Preparing Students for Modern Careers

Feedback from pupils has been very positive. For Lee Campbell, a 15-year old third year, MOS qualifications are a useful stepping-stone in his plan to work in the tech sector. Already very interested in IT, he was surprised by how much he got out of the courses. "I'd consider myself very good with computers, but as the courses get more complicated you realise you are doing things that you couldn't do before."

Having passed exams in PowerPoint and Word, he has no problem recommending MOS to his peers. "Apart from looking good on your CV, the skills you learn can be applied to other project work in school. I use Word documents and folders, and PowerPoint for presentations."

Another 15-year old, Paucic Dempsey, is thinking about a career in journalism and knew straight away that Microsoft IT Academy would be useful. Having passed the PowerPoint module, he's now working on the Word course. "They come in handy for a lot of extracurricular activity and having a certificate from Microsoft shows we know what we're doing. By the time I'll be looking for a job I'll be able to use all the major Microsoft applications which are the most popular in the workplace," he said. "Everybody does the standard Junior Cert subjects but not everybody has a Microsoft award."

Dr Kevin Marshall, Education Lead at Microsoft Ireland said:

"The MOS courses provide a vital bridge for young students, empowering them with IT skills that will not only benefit them in their education, but also provide a solid foundation for when they enter the world of work."

The move to the Junior Cycle Programme and the need for "off-the-shelf" courses should get more schools interested in Microsoft IT Academy, according to McHugh, because it delivers valuable education in one-year blocks. Summing up, she said: "The Microsoft IT Academy is ideal because students get to do something that is going to be useful to them in their education and eventually their careers. I think it's excellent."