E2 School Portrait Lent Rise Primary School Slough, England

Visited on: 11th, 12th November 2003
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1   General characteristics of the school

Lent Rise County Combined School is a popular school situated in an area of some disadvantage. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and have a wide range of attainments when they start school, but overall they start with below average attainments. There are 420 pupils on roll and two classes per year band from Early Years (aged 4) to Year 6 (10-11). About a third of the pupils have special educational needs.

The strategic vision for ICT at Lent Rise is to harness its power to motivate teachers and learners, increase access to learning and improve standards. The aim is to use it to promote social inclusion and create on-line learning communities within the school and through extended networks both nationally and internationally. The school also seeks to use ICT to empower its pupils to become independent and collaborative learners and to make the school a place where ICT removes barriers to learning, ignites excitement in learning and enables better sharing of learning as a community.

The school has a strong ethos of encouraging all pupils to fulfil their potential, with the aim of "preparing young people for tomorrow's future", by creating independent and confident learners. ICT is used as a teaching and learning tool to enhance and complement individualised learning throughout the school.

Five years ago, the school had limited ICT resources; ICT competences within staff were low. This has changed significantly. The school now has over 55 computers, housed in two ICT suites, a cyber café, the library and classrooms throughout the school. There is also a "Notebus" of fifteen wireless laptops. There are two school networks: RM Schoolshare in the early years ICT suite and RM Community Connect 3 in the main ICT suite. All network users can access their work from any workstation linked to the server. Sixteen interactive whiteboards have been installed throughout the school to aid the teaching and learning process. Printers around the school operate a 'credits' system and children store their work in their own folders on the server.

Video-conferencing enhances the taught curriculum by providing access to people, places and information in an interactive form. The school has three digital cameras, four web cams, a document reader (for use with the video conferencing unit), a digital microscope, a video camera, DVD player, scanners, two video and TV players. Windows XP laptops are available for staff to use in their professional roles; at least one laptop in every year group has a DVD Rom, which can be linked to an interactive whiteboard, and a CD rewriter.

Lent Rise has been designated as a Centre of Excellence for ICT. ICT is taught as a subject in its own right, but it is also embedded into teaching and learning practices within the overall curriculum with the aim of enhancing the learning opportunities of the pupils. Innovative practices provide individualised instruction, customised to meet the needs of pupils with different entry levels, interests, or conceptual difficulties.

2   *Changes for pupils*

The development of ICT provision has been part of a broader set of developments that have seen the school make much progress in terms of pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning. Standards in the school are high and the progress the pupils make during their time at the school is significant.

Learning environments are ICT-rich. Interactive whiteboards are used in almost all lessons. Pupils are used to taking part in lessons which involve them manipulating text and images on the whiteboard. For example, in a literacy lesson where the categorisation of connective words according to their purpose was taking place, the teacher used the whiteboard to concentrate pupils on complex vocabulary and then onto its use in their own written accounts. Pupils also access ICT resources readily in the ICT suite and cyber café, in their classrooms through the wireless networked laptops and through video conferencing resources. The library system is electronic and uses thumbprint recognition technology to enable access. Pupils see ICT in a wide range of contexts and recognise how it can help them in their learning.

Pupils now have one lesson per week of timetabled discrete ICT lessons and these aim to develop their ICT capability as prescribed by the National Curriculum. This means that pupils can use ICT tools such as word processors and presentation software confidently and for their own purposes. High quality planning also ensures that they have other opportunities to complement this work in lessons in other subjects. Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in the use of ICT to: solve problems, find information, develop their ideas through text, graphics and video, work through a range of media, write procedures to control external robots or images on the screen, and model real situations.

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The youngest pupils gain confidence with ICT through regular use, both as part of interactive teaching in literacy, numeracy and other subjects, and through using applications themselves in a wide range of contexts. From the age of four, children in the Early Years Department use a fully equipped ICT suite with ten PCs, a printer, an interactive whiteboard, a digital camera and Lenni, the Lent Rise robot, who is heavily featured on the Early Years website, encouraging children's imagination linked to ICT. They are able to e-mail him from both home and school and are thrilled when they receive a reply. They use the digital camera independently of the teacher when they take Lenni home for the weekend to record his adventures. With their parents, they write a short piece describing Lenni's adventures with them, and these are published

on the website. Using Lenni not only opens the children's thinking to ICT, but excites their motivation to develop their writing, speaking and listening. It involves parents with their children's learning and captures their imagination too.

As part of their literacy work a class of four year olds looked words that began with the same initial sound, for example "tiny turning tree", alongside pictures – they then stood up and pretended to be one! The teacher then showed a large letter "t" on the interactive whiteboard and the pupils all drew the letter shape in the air. They then took turns to draw over the letter shape on the whiteboard and moved pictures of objects that began with the letter "t" around the whiteboard. They are keen to participate and lessons have a strong visual element which significantly motivates the pupils.

By the age of eleven pupils use software to develop the presentation and content of their work through multimedia, word processing, desktop publishing or art and design packages. For example one class produced extended pieces of writing on "A day in the life of a Victorian child" as part of history and a newspaper report on a fictional detective in English. Two pupils produced a multimedia presentation for the prime minister, telling him about the school and inviting him to visit. A group of 7 to 8 year olds took part in a video conference with the National Maritime Museum in Liverpool and were able to ask questions of an expert there on the subject of fossils. Here they were able to ask questions such as 'where fossils come from?' and 'how old are fossils?' to a knowledgeable expert in the field and see examples from the museum directly related to their questions.

Pupils are very positive about the school in general and the learning opportunities provided. They particularly enjoy using ICT as a tool to learn with and for the development of their own work.

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Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for developments in the school. There is a School Council which meets monthly. All classes have one representative on this body, which is given a sum of money to spend on developing the school environment. This has resulted in the purchase of new resources for digital image capturing which will further enhance ICT provision. Classes are also represented on the Healthy Schools Task Group. This approach is important in developing an ethos in which pupils recognise that they have a share in the development of the school and in their own learning.

Each child has his/her own folder of work which stays with them throughout their time at the school. Their progress is tracked on a termly basis by staff who use the 'Traca' assessment program for this purpose. This analyses progress of individuals and cohorts in the core curriculum areas. Years 4 to 6 produce their own portfolios on the computer through PowerPoint. Through these they set their own targets for literacy, numeracy and behaviour as well as a general target for each half term and later evaluate their progress against these. As they move through the years, pupils become more confident in manipulating the resources and add animation to these PowerPoints.

Pupils use webcams, digital cameras and PowerPoint to develop animation and movie zpresentations. These are used to develop not only their speaking, listening and presentation skills, but also to their imaginative thinking and literacy. Upper Key Stage 2 pupils have begun to use software to develop musical compositions.

3 *Changes for teachers*

Teachers enjoy the same benefits as pupils in terms of enhanced resources. All teaching staff have a laptop on which they can prepare their lessons as well as access an interactive whiteboard. They plan to use ICT in almost all their lessons, including the interactive whiteboards, the network and the well-designed ICT suite and cyber café. They are expected to make creative use of these resources as part of their teaching of all subjects and to teach ICT as a subject in weekly timetabled lessons. Recently the school has invested in software to enhance the teaching of particular subjects using the interactive whiteboards. This means that teachers now have ready access to exciting and stimulating materials for teaching such themes as fractions, shape and space and, as in one lesson, the germination of seeds.

Year 6 pupils were learning the parts of a flower in science. On the whiteboard was a diagram of the flower with the labels concealed. Pupils had the same diagram on a worksheet, with different levels of clue for differing ability groups and additional support from a learning assistant for some; they had to complete the diagram themselves. The class discussion that followed illustrated well the particular benefit of the interactive whiteboard. Pupils had to go to the board and drag and drop words into the diagram. Mistakes were allowed at first and the teacher then asked the class to suggest changes. There was a high level of debate and this was accompanied by good questioning by the teacher – eg "why does the pollen have to be high up?" Many changes were made and unmade and this all helped to confirm the names and functions of the flower parts in a unique way.

Time in staff meetings is devoted to ICT developments. As part of this, teachers demonstrate in their own classrooms the ways in which they have used ICT in their teaching. This sharing and collaborative approach is significant and has been a key means of establishing a consistent approach across the staff. Newly qualified teachers and others new to the school, attend for two to three days in advance of their arrival. This gives them the chance to learn about how the school uses ICT in lessons and ensures that they are ready to implement the school's approach to ICT immediately when they take up their posts.

Visual presentations and explanations are strengths of the teaching. Interactive whiteboards stimulate better discussion leading to better understanding. Provisionality means that staff and pupils can go backwards and forwards through resources, adapting the pace of learning as necessary.

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Lent Rise is a training school and as such takes trainee teachers on different routes to qualification. Staff are not employed for their expertise in ICT; the school plans and implements its own training programmes for all new and existing members of staff. The school has an ICT co-ordinator, who is supports by two shadow Co-ordinators, one in each key stage and this provides an appropriate level of support for staff. The co-ordinators are responsible for updating and researching appropriate educational resources, staff training and trouble shooting. A separate member of staff has the role of video-conferencing co-ordinator and is accountable for video-conferencing resources, staff support and sourcing contacts.

Staff ICT training takes place frequently so that staff can keep up to date with software and hardware developments. Over the last year this has included the use of the network, animation and control software, developing the use of PowerPoint, video-conferencing, creating web pages and using an interactive whiteboard. Dedicated laptops are available to allow staff the opportunity for professional development and teaching preparation.

All teaching staff and teaching assistants have their own copies of the Lent Rise ICT Staff Handbook, which has been written by the ICT co-ordinator and which is updated as necessary. It is a working document, designed to ease new teachers' transition from their previous school or past experiences, to enable them to carry out the ICT curriculum to the standard expected at the school. The document provides new teachers with information on hardware and software, how to use ICT in all areas of the curriculum, how to develop the ICT capability of all children and how to extend activities and support children with special educational needs. It provides assistance and guidance for the recording, monitoring and assessment of ICT.

The handbook also explains the role of the teaching assistant and provides clear guidelines for them in assisting children during sessions. The teaching assistants are now competent when they support children during lessons and small group tasks. This has provided the teachers with reliable assistance during sessions and the children with a further source of help and skills. The handbook highlights some simple procedures to follow when troubleshooting technical problems.

All staff received training in website construction in September 2002. The school currently has three linked websites. The main site has been developed by the whole staff. Teaching staff are completely responsible for the input and maintenance of web pages for their classes and year groups; the headteacher and office staff maintain pages about the whole school.

4 *Organisational change*

The headteacher is the mainspring of ICT developments in the school, which have accelerated rapidly in recent years. She has ensured that the staff she has appointed
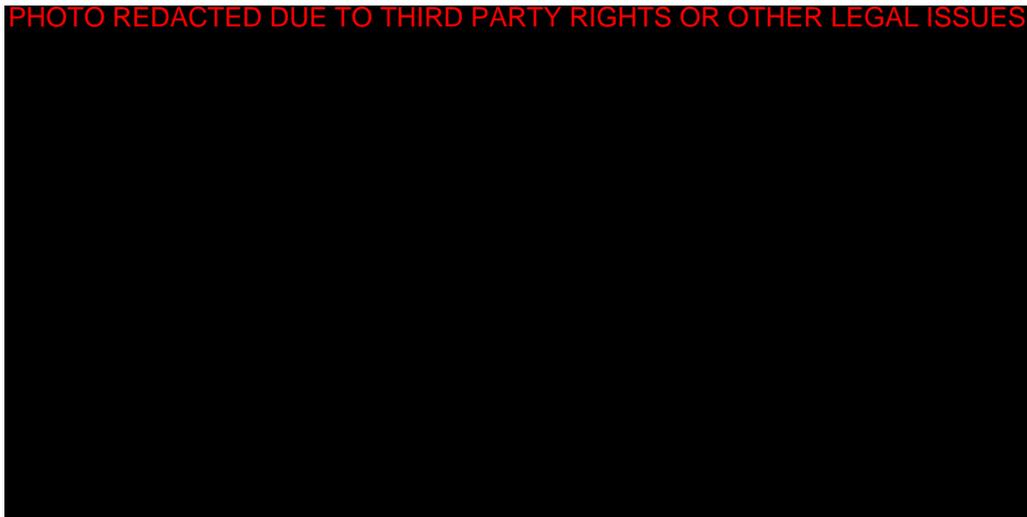
have the skills, understanding and attitudes to turn her vision into reality in the class-room. She has pursued links with commercial organisations relentlessly so that the school has gained full benefit in developing its resources, such as the network and video conferencing facilities. She maintains strong and positive links with Government departments and agencies. For example: the school hosts visits from other headteachers undertaking the national training programme in the strategic leadership of ICT and hosts trainee teachers following a variety of qualification routes. The school has recognised the need for and subsequently the benefits of having two part-time technicians, one via the Local Education Authority (LEA) and one from a major commercial supplier. This ensures that staff are able to concentrate on teaching rather than technical matters.

The ICT management team ensures that the co-ordination is shared between staff and does not fall to one teacher; it also means that ICT is firmly rooted in the role of the senior management team. This group works well together and brings a range of complementary skills to the task. This was particularly evident in their recent spending of "e-learning credits" (allocated to the school by the Government). The school identified a distinct software need and focus for their purchasing and concentrated on acquiring teaching resources that could be used to enhance the teaching of all subjects and at all levels using the interactive whiteboards.

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The school is committed to professional development and each member of staff is given half a day per term to research materials on the web with a specific subject focus. The fruits of these labours are then shared with all other staff in the same year group.

The school also uses its web sites to present its work to a wider audience and ICT is also reflected strongly in the high quality display throughout the school. Two examples are the use of digital camera images to create a display of 'hidden identities' and a further display which described the historical development of the computer.

The school is breaking down barriers through ICT; for example, parents are encouraged to work with their children after school in the cyber café. Here pupils and parents collaborate together as they use the Internet and other tools as part of their investigations sharing their varied levels of knowledge and with pupils often demonstrating their skills to their parents.

ICT is central to the school's commitment to providing the very highest quality teaching and learning. In turn they have generated a leadership approach which carefully evaluates and considers the benefits of ICT to their central purpose. Overall this is an organisation that believes that ICT must be used where it is 'fit for purpose' and first and foremost where it makes a contribution to pupils' learning. Staff have moved beyond the notion of simply adopting new technologies and now believe that they must adapt them and improve upon them so that they are used to provide the very best teaching and learning opportunities for their pupils.

The school has negotiated a contract with the Lifelong Learning Partnerships organisation to enable the teaching assistants to use the cyber café one night a week to train. This gives them confidence when working with children, but also gives them a qualification.

5   Changes in co-operation with others

The school uses ICT to reach the community as well as pupils, parents and other professionals through e-mail, video-conferencing and the school websites. The other two websites relate to the Early Years Department and the Healthy School status. The Early Years website was created by the Head of the Early Years Department and is updated and maintained on a weekly basis. Parents are able to access the site to find out information, to look at pupils' work and to e-mail the school office or Lenni, the Early Years mascot. Parents are able to communicate with the headteacher and office staff through email. This is in addition to the school's open door policy, where parents are invited to approach class teachers to discuss any concerns, problems or difficulties they may have. Parents are also being encouraged to join their children when using the cyber café after school hours.

Lent Rise has been actively involved in training teachers since 1998. In partnership with the University of Nottingham, the SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) scheme offers a one-year programme of teacher training in a consortium of primary schools. The SCITT offers a distinctive form of post-graduate teacher training, since it is based in schools and run by them. This year there are two SCITT students training at the school.

New for this year is the start of the school's involvement with the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). This government initiative aims to encourage more graduates to enter the teaching profession and is aimed at those who have pursued other careers since leaving University. To be accepted for the GTP scheme an applicant is required to find a school that is willing to take complete responsibility for their training. There is one GTP student training at Lent Rise for this year.

The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) has nominated Lent Rise an "e-confident school" because of its good practice in ICT and the school has featured in an NCSL training video for senior leaders in schools attending the Strategic Leadership in ICT training programme nationally. The school is delighted now to

contribute to the course run by NCSL and the British Educational Communication Technology Agency (Becta) in strategic leadership in ICT (SLICT), especially as the headteacher benefited greatly from her involvement in one of the pilot courses of this programme. This course provides school leaders with a network of heads and deputies in other schools to begin and maintain a professional dialogue and to seek further innovation. Lent Rise is a "host school" and this means that course delegates visit the school to learn about how ICT is used and how developments are led and managed.

Partnerships with businesses have helped to provide the school with ICT resources. For example, collaboration with Questmark, a communications company, resulted in the installation of a video-conferencing unit. The company also provided training and support for staff to ensure effective use of the equipment. The school has since benefited from links with contacts around the world. One of the main advantages of video-conferencing is in developing pupils' appreciation of people, places and experiences outside of the immediate community. It does not replace educational visits or visitors. It allows face-to-face interactions between speakers, which is not only very motivating for pupils, but also helps to develop speaking and listening skills as well as being an effective research tool.

Last year, Questmark continued their partnership with the school by upgrading the video-conferencing equipment and supplying a document reader. This meant that pupils' ICT experiences were further developed by writing stories for an e-book published on-line.

Other examples of collaboration with businesses are working together with Lego to provide pupils with the latest control equipment and trialling Research Machines' "ICT Alive" course, providing the school with access to e-learning resources and software.

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6   *Reflections and ambitions*

When the school started out on the road to developing its ICT provision, staff did not have information which was easily accessible to help them to make informed decisions. A lot of the work they did was experimental. Staff trialled resources and then tried to identify their impact, which meant that they did not always move as quickly or as effectively as they could have done.

During the early stages of ICT development, staff confidence and competencies presented themselves as potential barriers to the effective teaching of ICT skills. This was an issue that needed addressing to guarantee the progress of ICT and its growing role within the school community. All teaching staff took part in the national training programme four years ago and this provided them with confidence in their skills and ability to use ICT. All teaching staff now receive regular ICT training to keep up with new initiatives, hardware and software improvements and to share their knowledge, ideas and discoveries. This helps to generate a collaborative and supportive staff learning environment.

As with all educational establishments, budgets are a constraint. Updating resources is an on-going programme; hardware becomes quickly out of date and new applications are continually being introduced. This is a reflection of the sheer pace of technological change.

The two technicians ensure the smooth running of the hardware. This means that the role of the ICT co-ordinator is to support teachers in the appropriately use of technology throughout the curriculum and to ensure pace and challenge in the classroom

The school has started to develop further opportunities for email and video-conferencing contacts within Europe. This is helping to bring the European dimension alive in the classroom. The school will also install broadband in the near future to improve the speed of Internet connections. Other planned developments include the use of web-cams linked to classroom workstations in Years 2 and 5. These are to be called "corner cafés" and the intention is for pupils to use these to create animated story-boards.

The school also aims to involve parents more in the learning community at Lent Rise. This is starting to happen through the websites and the use of innovative ideas such as Lenni the robot, complementing the recent implementation of the cyber café which houses state-of-the art computers for children and parents to use out of school hours as a learning and research tool. Part of the school vision is to create a computer literate community, including parents and the wider community. Through the use of ICT for social interaction as well as educational purposes, the school seeks to encourage development of the whole child. The headteacher hopes that giving parents and carers the opportunity to see and experience how their children use and learn from ICT will change their own use of, and attitude towards ICT. Future plans also include the setting of homework tasks involving the use of ICT and providing on-line access to school work and resources from the home.

7   *Appreciation*

Lent Rise is a school that has made rapid and significant progress in a relatively short time. Networked technologies are starting to be taken for granted by pupils and teachers alike, as part of the normal educational experience; ICT is now so embedded into the day-to-day functioning of the school, that it is no longer viewed as a separate 'subject'.

The school is slowing breaking down the walls of the classroom by extending the school day, using innovative ideas (such as the cyber café), using adaptable resources (such as wireless laptops) and involving other people in the education process (eg parents and the business world). Staff are constantly developing good practice and the school is striving to facilitate greater links between home, school and the wider community through the use of ICT. Creating this educational focus by linking ICT to the home is essential to inspire communication skills of pupils and raise their aspirations.

What makes Lent Rise unusual is the clarity of vision, determination and tenacity of the headteacher, combined with the sheer hard work and commitment of her staff. This has ensured that the common obstacles of lack of resources and staff competence have been systematically broken down with notable success. Staff respond well to the head's challenge and are effectively supported. They are willing to take risks and to try out new ideas and see this as a hallmark of their professionalism. The recognition of this distinctive approach has led to the scheme in which new staff are inducted for several days prior to starting at the school and this ensures a continuation of the ethos and approach to teaching and learning.

8   *Lesson for others*

The school has set out to develop its use of ICT in teaching and learning alongside the development of the pupils' ICT capability as prescribed in the National Curriculum. The ICT policy and schemes of work are based on the national exemplar schemes. These schemes are used as a guide, with teaching staff adapting and extending them as necessary. As standards in ICT rise year on year, the school adapts its planning with further extensions to cater for pupils' progression. In order to support this progression, each teacher sets objectives and outcomes that go beyond the guidelines. This ensures that pupils develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to make effective use of the technology in all of the learning situations they encounter.

The application of ICT to everyday work in the classroom is impressive and this has resulted from a number of factors that have combined to produce very effective school development. The headteacher's clear vision and determination have driven the progress from the outset. She has demanded commitment and high standards from all of her staff, but, crucially, has complemented this with high levels of support through training and resources and at a personal and professional level. She has networked very effectively not only with commercial organisations but also with government agencies. The co-ordination team further strengthen ICT developments in the school, ensuring that ICT is embedded in teaching and learning across key stages. All teachers and teaching assistants have responded very positively to the supportive and sharing climate by committing themselves to continually developing their own practice and showing a willingness to take risks. Finally, the reliability of the ICT resources is assured by the provision of effective technical support.

The school has moved a long way in the last five years and is now closer to its vision of a learning community integrated through ICT. The wide use of the technology that the children in this school experience means that they will be well equipped to live and work in a world where learning will be a key skill. More importantly, their learning experiences here engender positive attitudes towards learning and the excitement that this can bring to young lives.