

SECTION C (PART TWO):

Ten of the Case Studies in Full

1.

Video conferencing in the Early Years classroom

Schools Involved:

Tipton St John Primary School
Cockwood Primary School

Background: Tipton is a 4 -11 village primary school in East Devon with three classes and 79 children on roll. Cockwood is a 4 -11 village primary school, south of Exeter with three classes and 80 children on roll. We were keen to explore the use of video conferencing with the very youngest children. We also wanted to consider video conferencing as a means of encouraging networking between staff and children in small schools. There were existing links between the two schools and we hoped that these would be strengthened through a shared project.

Reception/Year 1 staff involved: At Tipton - Penny Burnside, Caroline King and Libby Staples. At Cockwood - Heather Anderson, Holly Hilliard, Sharon Hodge. **Other colleagues involved:** Judith Carter, Rod Crook, Emma Gilbert, Rob Graham, Alistair Hayward, Sandy Oxford.

Aims and Curriculum Context

- To look at under-fives provision in small schools
- To consider the implications of introducing the Foundation curriculum in mixed-age classes
- To explore the notion of benchmarking

expectations through 'visiting' a parallel class • For Reception and Year 1 children to be aware of and use a wide range of ICT to communicate with each other.

Planning

We were very keen for the children to be involved in shaping the project and to make choices as it progressed, so we planned very little of the content for the first session. Our initial planning focused mainly on practical details such as who, where and when. All the children from the two Reception/Year 1 classes were to be involved, with their teachers and learning support assistants, and in their own classrooms. The video conferencing kit was to be set up for the whole morning to allow for several 'short bursts' of conferencing, as appropriate, depending on the response of the children.

The Video Conferences

Session 1 October - Exploring

The children sat on the carpet in front of the television screen. It was difficult to tell whether they found it more exciting to see other children waving to them or seeing themselves on the screen. Introductions took place. "Hello. I'm Jason. I'm 5", was met with gasps of "I'm 5!", "I'm 5!" and so it continued as other points in common were discovered. Questions were asked about 'things we had', and children in both classes went to find reading bags and PE kits to show to the camera. Contents of lunch-boxes were a source of interest and could have occupied much of the morning. "Where things are" was the next line of questioning, including the very important "Where are your toilets?" After a short break for planning and setting-up, the two groups of children gave a 'conducted tour' of their respective classrooms, showing role-play areas, the shop, computers and the reading areas, all chosen by the children. To show the two playgrounds we had to film at playtime with a camcorder and then play this back through the video conferencing kit. This also allowed children to see the older children in each school. We experimented with singing, using a song known by children in both schools. There was a slight time delay in the sound, which produced a type of canon effect, but the children appeared not to notice. The children exchanged letters and faxes before the next session.

Session 2 November - Exploring 2

Sickness had prevented one of the class teachers from taking part in the first session, so part of the second session involved a recap of the first, and repeating those elements which had worked well. We tried to learn children's names and each teacher called the register. We followed this with a speaking and listening 'news-telling' slot. Children showed one another their work and talked about what they had been doing in their respective classes. We did more singing. There were more technical hitches with this session, with the connection sometimes being lost.

Session 3 January

This session was planned in some detail, as we were now familiar with the equipment and its potential and limitations, and we knew how children were likely to respond.

Conferencing began at about 9.30. Both sets had been switched on before 9.00 and children

and their parents were able to see the start of the day in both schools. (One of the parents commented that it reminded him of 'Star Trek' and the transporter room!) Heather took a joint register, alternating names from both schools. Penny led the singing of an action song, 'Get up, get out of bed' and some prayers. Everyone introduced him or herself, including the new Reception children. Children in both classes had had birthdays, so all the children sang for them. There was some general chatting.

At break-time, all the teachers and learning support assistants 'met' their opposite numbers. Some of the Tipton football team, curious to see what they were missing, crept in and challenged Cockwood to a match.

After break, Heather led both classes in a mental maths session. Penny then read a Big Book 'Where's my Teddy?' with both classes. Cockwood children were able to follow their own copy of the book. The session finished with some general chatting, another song, lunchtime prayers and goodbyes.

Session 4 January - Staff Meeting on Operating the Equipment

We had a training session for all the teachers from both schools in using the kit. Staff got to know each other better. As part of the general chatting, Tipton invited Cockwood to join a staff meeting the following day.

Session 5 January - Staff Meeting with Paul Smith on Thinking Skills

This had not been part of the original plan but the speaker, Paul Smith, was happy to work with both schools together. There was a lot of friendly chat amongst the big group and, despite the distance, there was a good atmosphere. Paul had some worksheets for the Tipton staff. These were faxed through to Cockwood, and Tipton watched as they arrived on the screen - a surreal moment!

Football - finally! June 15

After several delays because of bad weather, the football match finally took place in June. This was a significant moment, both in terms of the exciting 7 - 4 result and for the first actual face-to-face meeting by children.

A Teddy Bears' Picnic - Planning

The intention had always been for the children to meet in real life. A picnic was arranged for the summer term and planning for this was done by video conferencing.

Teddy Bears' Picnic - July

Cockwood children visited Tipton for the day. Opening the gate, a Cockwood child asked, "Is this still England?" Children and teddies spent the day together, getting to know one another, reading together and singing - Cockwood children had made up a song especially for the occasion - and ending the day with a party.

Lasting Memories

All the children very much enjoyed meeting children they had seen on the screen. The Cockwood children enjoyed the Tipton playground and putting the school in its context.

Related Work

Letters, faxes and pictures were exchanged. Cockwood made Tipton a book. New songs were learned. There were comparisons of the two schools and their surrounding areas. There was a strong PSHE element, with children understanding that there were children similar to them in other schools. Children drew maps and made models showing what they thought the school layout was like from evidence on the screen and from what they were told.

Technical Issues

Sound - the time delay made it a little difficult. Movement was a problem, with the pictures not being as clear as the children would have liked. Careful positioning of the microphone was necessary. Having an additional adult to operate the handset was useful. This freed teachers to concentrate on teaching and managing the children. Training children to operate the handset is something we intend to try.

Evaluation

The project enabled children to experience life beyond their own school. It helped them to make natural comparisons between schools. They were inspired to write letters, cards and invitations, and to draw maps, plans and diagrams. Meeting in real life was enjoyable and provided an opportunity to mix with other children and make new friends. Children are still talking about it over six months later. Staff development was a feature of the project, in terms of staff-meetings and professional discussions, and also in terms of staff in each school observing one another teach.

Why this Worked

'Choose a school you know a little bit'. This we believe to be key. The ethos of the two schools was similar and there was a level of professional trust which allowed both classrooms to be thoroughly 'visited'. The enthusiasm of the children was significant, as was their willingness to 'have-a-go'. So was the willingness of school staff to let this happen.

Children's Evaluation

"It's really fun seeing each other."

"I liked the Teddy Bears' Picnic."

"It was fun talking to them and getting to know them and seeing Tipton School better."

"It was excellent - you could see their school and who was there."

"Good. We showed them around Class 3 and they showed round there."

"I liked it when we watched them."

"I liked it when we played number board."

"It was fun when we sang songs together."

"It was nice seeing all the children. It was a good story."

"I liked their playground things."

"You can't hear when people talk at the same time."

"I enjoyed telling them about me."

"Sometimes when they were trying to talk they got excited and you couldn't hear them."

"You could find some new friends."

Ideas for Potential Development

Conference regularly. Link up for particular aspects of work where a larger group of children (or adults) is needed. Possible activities:

- Shared reading activities, reading a playscript together
- Investigations
- Shared tasks for gifted and talented children
- Joint staff meetings - with or without a visiting speaker
- Sharing resource ideas - seeing them in action
- Joint planning. Video conferencing is like a 'visual phone-call'!

Ways Forward

Children's ideas for further development:

- We could share work
- We could show new equipment and how it works
- Do Literacy and maths together
- Exchange ideas on the same topic
- We could show a playground game or song
- Share similar interests.

Penny Burnside, Tipton St John Primary School

2.

Collaboration between two small primary schools using video conferencing

Schools Involved:

Branscombe Primary School, Devon
Farway Primary School, Devon

Background: Branscombe and Farway are two small, rural, East Devon primary schools, each with less than 60 pupils on role. First, the use of video conferencing to support collaborative work between the two schools was explored. After a number of familiarisation sessions for staff and pupils, including both schools linking to the Ocean Institute in California, six-week programmes were planned for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 which incorporated regular video conferencing sessions for all pupils.

Aims:

- to familiarise the children with the concept of video conferencing
- to accustom pupils to talking freely with other pupils from the linked school
- to gain experience of presenting work to different audiences
- to share and exchange ideas with other pupils studying the same topics

Curriculum Context: Key Stage 2 science