Newsletter

Friday 4 October 2013 - Learning newsletter

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Learning in a digital world

This edition of the Stephen Perse Foundation's blog newsletter will focus on the impact of digital learning across our school communities. In such a short overview it is not possible to give the full picture - please visit us to find out more!

This newsletter is also available to view via our **learning blog**.

For families new to the Foundation it is worth explaining why we have these special newsletters:

> *It is important to lift the lid on the education that we provide. We would like you to be able to see the daily life and thoughts of the schools - a window on the experience of your son or daughter.*

We write these as Wordpress blogs for two reasons. First, we tried it as an experiment and most people chose to open the Wordpress rather than the PDF (but we still give you a choice). Secondly, because the blog is also picked up by a national and global audience which helps the school to broaden its own contacts and to ensure that we are at the forefront of dialogue on such issues. Even though we are only in our 3rd edition here, it has been picked up in over 25 countries. That, on its own, indicates a little of the digital world. Understanding this area of education and its opportunities has never been more important.

An introduction from Mr Daniel Edwards, Director of Digital Strategy

Learning is a lifelong experience with an ever changing environment challenging us to adapt and continue our development. Progress in the digital world has meant that learning has become a process of discovery and filtering, with a wealth of information available at our fingertips. Perceived barriers to learning, such as complicated IT systems, have been replaced with intuitive interfaces. This means that the process of learning has developed from 'finding' the answer to 'what can we do' with that answer.

Expressions of learning and creativity are no longer dominated by the written word. Instead we can narrate an animation, edit a movie or record a video conversation from anywhere in the world whilst collaborating on a project. The tools available to us are used if they enhance learning. In truth the digital world now supports a learning environment that has always been desired, one of challenge, variation and adaptation.

Senior School

App club is well under way in our senior school (also in the 6th form). With the help of Mr Rob Percival, formerly of our maths department, students are using the SPFapp.com website (devised by Mr Pervical) to create simple apps. The idea is that the app creator allows students to focus on the content rather than on the coding itself - mastery of which would take a long time and could be a barrier to the enthusiasm. Mr Percival says, *"The beauty of this is that the vast majority of what they do is independent. Learning this way is largely by experiment. The technical aspects are being picked up almost without them realising."* So far, 50 students have been attending the weekly session with a further group in the 6th form of around 20.

Dasha Antonova, year 11, explained the workings of her app for testing Ancient Greek grammar. *"The point is, there's no real commercial market for such a thing - it is so niche! That's why it is so great to be able to make our own apps to do what we want and need."*

Emi Rush, year 8 showed us her app - a recipe collector. The video shows us how it works - not bad for 2 weeks' work!
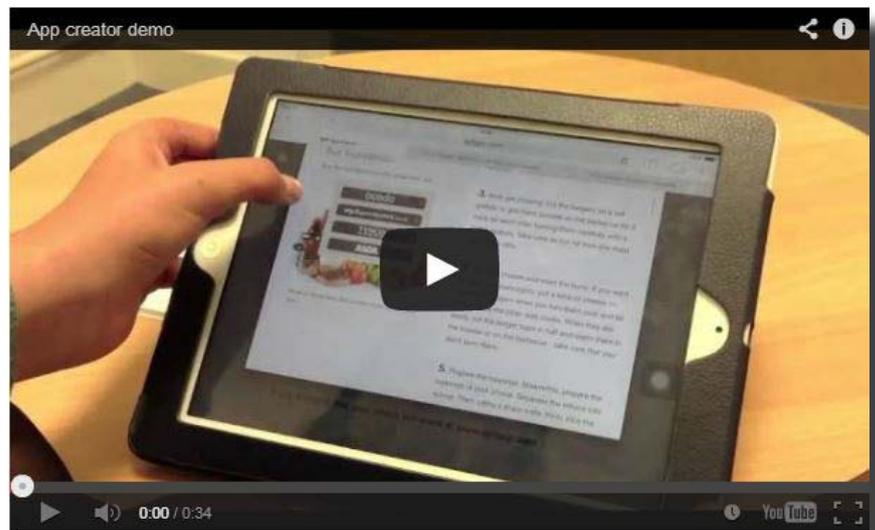
6th Form

The SPFapp.com website will also allow students to become more involved in coding as they progress and this, we know, is the aim of the 6th form who are looking forward to their purchase of a few Raspberry Pi computers.

Meanwhile, in the classroom, the 6th form are making use of their iPads - which have replaced the notebook PCs. The iPad is extremely flexible as a learning tool. For example, notes on the Notability app allow seamless integration of images, text, handwritten notes and diagrams and even voice recording and with direct output to GoogleDrive as a PDF the content can be shared immediately with fellow students or teachers. The key is that this is now a choice available to the students - they can work this way if they find it is best for them.

Mr Simon Armitage's IB Geography classes are early adopters and have all their resources available on GoogleDrive (every student has a free 30GB of cloud storage). Mr Armitage comments, *"collaboration is the main benefit so far. Students have accumulated notes on a topic in a shared document (a GoogleDoc). This has then been projected in class and discussed whilst the class take collective ownership of the materials and add to or adjust the notes - all live on screen, so everyone can see."*. New options are opening up for revision such as the use of the Explain Everything app which allows students to record their own 'live' whiteboard with embedded video as well as images, website, text and handwriting content. It's a new option and one that is, potentially, very powerful.

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Dame Bradbury's School

'Lessons have become more productive and interesting', 'They have changed the way people work ... more independently', 'They have helped me to understand more in my lessons', 'It's a new, exciting, interactive way of learning without writing things down on paper'.

These are some of the quotes from the questionnaire on iPad usage completed by our prep school pupils. iPads are an excellent resource. They are another tool used by the teachers to inspire the pupils, develop further their creativity and extend their learning.

Year 6 pupils used iPads to research primary sources ahead of their visit to the Black Country Museum. The ingenious facility of being able to stretch the image on the screen allowed the pupils to be able to read original census data and other Victorian documents clearly. This previous learning made the visit far more meaningful – it was as if they had travelled back in time...

Year 2 loved using "Puppet Pals" to retell the legend of St George and the Dragon through animation. The children wanted to learn more about famous knights following on from their recent trip to The Tower of London.

We are always wanting to improve what we do and how we learn. Year 5 pupils have been working on cartwheels: developing control, co-ordination, timing and body shape.

Filming then analysing each others' cartwheels and giving specific feedback on their peers' performance has proved effective use of the mobile devices. It's also improved the quality of their cart-wheels!

Junior School

Junior School pupils relish opportunities to use digital tools in every area of the curriculum and, in so doing, their learning is greatly enhanced and they acquire a vast range of skills from effective researching to programming.

stephen perse
pre-prep school

DAME BRADBURY'S SCHOOL

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Junior School

Members of Years 5 and 6, who have recently been using both iPads and laptops for extended writing, are very much looking forward to a focus on digital citizenship next week when their Maths lessons will be dedicated to developing basic coding skills; supported by work on logic in thinking skills and sequencing in English.
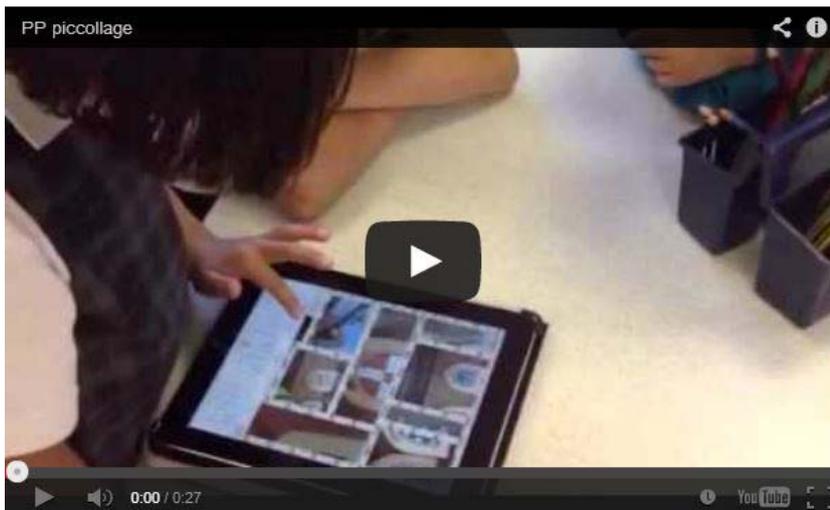
Through exploring a range of control based programs and apps, such as Hopscotch, these pupils will be able to hone the coding skills which are introduced to younger children using Daisy the Dinosaur and Logo's Move the Turtle.

In the meantime Year 6 have been creating Keynote presentations and using Grammaropolis, a fantastic app to assist them in becoming super sleuths as grammar detectives, and Year 5 have used Pages to create dating profiles for Henry VIII's wives!

Pre-prep

As part of the children's topic on Kings and Queens they have been researching shields and crests. The children used iPads to photograph crests in their local environment on a shield hunt which ended in a visit to the University Outfitters Ryder and Aimes. On return to the classroom the children were inspired to share their learning with others. They used their own images and collaborative skills to create a poster which could be uploaded to Tumblr using the Pic Collage app for all to see. Look out for the children's own printed shields on Tumblr soon. Visit us at: **Stephen Perse Foundation Tumblr**

Visit our blog here: **http://stephenperselearning.wordpress.com/**