

Does the use of on line ICT resources at home and at school have an impact on the attainment of our pupils?



Year Group: Year 9-11

This was the question that I chose to attempt to answer as part of the London Challenge Design Collaborative Partnership Project. The project had collaborative working among teachers of different Local Authorities as one of its aims and also aimed to get teachers to begin to see themselves as action researchers who can make a real impact on the wider education community as a whole.

I chose this question because I believe that there should be stronger links between how pupils learn at school and how they learn at home. Learning should be extended beyond the classroom and if the resources that pupils have access to at school were available to them at home it could make a real difference to their actual attainment and confidence levels.

I also think that ICT is an excellent but underused medium and that teachers are reluctant to set pupils ICT tasks for homework. I wanted to find out why. What are the obstacles or misconceptions and how can we begin to correct it?



My research methods

One of the resources that pupils at our school have available to them as a home-school resource is SamLearning and I used this as a starting point for my investigation, although it wasn't the only resource that I investigated. SamLearning is an online revision resource that has revision exercises and tests for almost all of the GCSE and KS3 subjects. Pupils have their own usernames and passwords and can work their way through the tests and exercises at their own pace. Teachers can make use of SamLearning to track pupil progress and to set homework tasks.



I did an analysis of the usage stats for SamLearning and picked 52 year 9, 10 and 11 pupils who have made use of the resource for more than four hours. I then did an analysis of our schools baseline data, teacher assessments and predictions for these pupils in order to identify factors that may have had an influence on their attainment. I also asked them to fill out questionnaires and did group interviews to give me a clearer picture of their views.

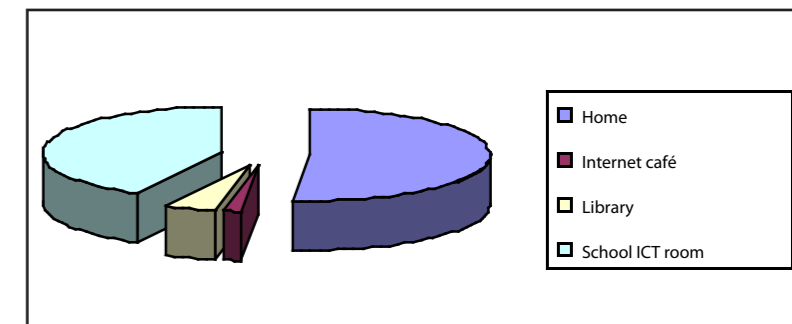
It was also important to me to find out what teachers think and to this end I asked members of staff to complete similar questionnaires to the ones given to pupils. Twenty two questionnaires were returned. As ICT access at home is a key issue I did a separate survey of the whole school to find out where pupils accessed the internet and then compared the results with other national statistics.

Finally I felt the investigation wouldn't be complete without a comparison of actual results. I picked 20 pupils who have specifically made use of SamLearning for more than 4 hours for maths and compared them to pupils with similar academic profiles who have not made use of the resource.

What I found out

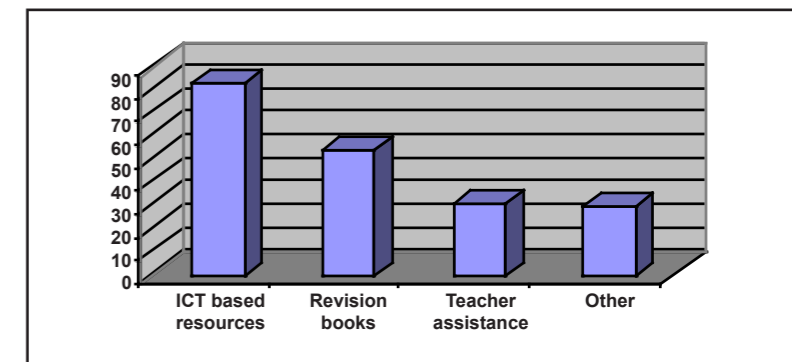
Internet access

64% of our pupils had access to the Internet at home. This increased to 79% if access via other means such as friends, family, local library and Internet cafes was included and with provision being made in school via lunchtime and after school clubs, 100% of them have access to ICT if they choose to make use of it.



Pupil questionnaires

One of the things worth noting from the questionnaire results is that two of the top four revision methods preferred by pupils included ICT based resources.

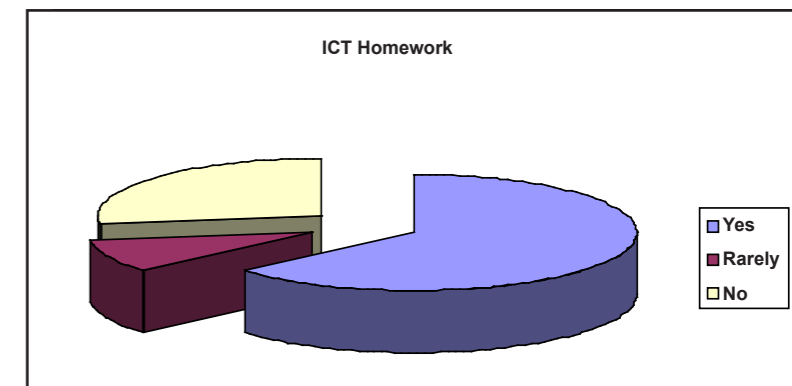


60% of the pupils asked said that the use of SamLearning has made a difference to how confident they feel.

Other results worth noting are that all pupils who were making use of ICT at home were introduced to the resources they were using by their teachers and for more than 50% of these pupils their parents were aware of their use of these resources.

Teacher questionnaires

63% of teachers asked said that they set ICT related homework. Teachers were also asked to provide a why/why not explanation for this question and it became clear that teachers who do not set ICT related homework had concerns about pupil access to ICT. It thus became apparent that teachers are not aware of how accessible ICT has become.



The teacher questionnaires also showed that 59% of the teachers asked rated their ICT skills as good to very good.

Comparison of actual results

The results for the year 9 comparison group were very promising as 4 pupils from the SamLearning sample exceeded their maths target levels and ten out of the eleven pupils in the group obtained better results than their counterparts in the control group. The results for the GCSE group were mixed and need further investigation.

Recommendations

There needs to be a much stronger drive by the whole school community to start making use of ICT as a cross curricular resource at home and at school. The first step in this drive should be to raise awareness with regard to the effectiveness of ICT as a resource and to raise awareness with regard to the availability of ICT after school hours. The drive needs to start with senior management and I will therefore initially be sharing my findings directly with the Leadership team. I will also be publishing my results in an easy to read format in the school's newsletter in order to share it with pupils and parents.