Dunfermline High at the core!

Introduction

In the past an ICT course had been run in Dunfermline High but for staffing reasons it had not been possible to run it for two years. Further, the HMI inspection of the School in 2004 had highlighted the use of ICT as an area requiring further development. It was decided, after representations from the Computing Department, that an ICT course would be offered in session 2005/6 and it was up to the Department to decide the exact 'shape' that the course would take. The Department discussed this extensively and the resulting course is the subject of this paper.

Aims of the Course

The aims of the course, which are of necessity limited by the time available (1 period per week), are:

1   To develop useful, transferable ICT skills of use throughout the School.

2   To enable pupils in S1 to log on and use the school network effectively.

3   To certificate pupils at the appropriate level in ICT Core Skills

4   To cover ICT content relevant to other subjects, notably Mathematics and Social Subjects.

Decisions

After consultation a number of decisions were made:

1   The course would be offered jointly by the Computing and Business Studies Departments.

2   Timetable constraints limited the time available to 1 period per S1 class per week.

3   A member of the computing staff willingly volunteered to take on the task of preparing the course and liaising with the other departments concerned.

4   Another member of staff agreed to liaise with the SQA regarding certification.

The Course

It was decided to offer a course with 'core' elements and appropriate extension work, thus ensuring differentiation. The assessments also have an in-built element of differentiation. The course was offered to the entire S1 cohort (326 pupils).

The main components of the course are outlined below:

Topic	Core or Extension	Comments
Using an ICT system effectively and responsibly.	Core	Covers use of all hardware and of the school network. Obvious benefits for whole school with confident ICT users developed.
Text processing including integrating text and graphics.	Core	Covers effective use of various functions of a word processor. Again, skills developed here have benefits for whole school.
Number processing using spreadsheets	Core	Covers effective use of spreadsheets. This section also covers Mathematics objectives in using spreadsheets.
Searching and extracting data.	Core	Covers effective extraction of information from various sources including databases and the Internet. This section also covers Mathematic objectives in 'information handling' and tasks produced in conjunction with Social Subjects.
Graphics	Extension	Covers preparation of simple graphics and inserting graphics into other applications. Benefits for pupils ability to produce attractive, illustrated documents.
LOGO	Extension	This extension unit was used in the Computing Department as a simple, short introduction to programming using turtle graphics.
Web page design	Extension	This extension unit was used by both department teaching pupils to produce their own web pages.

Assessment for certification

It was decided to use the published SQA Core Skills assessments and checklists. By undertaking the appropriate course units and assessments teachers would accumulate evidence for each pupil, with the level at which they should be certificated.

SQA confirmed that, with the relaxing of 'age and stage' in line with recent initiatives such as 'Determined to Succeed' and 'Curriculum for Excellence', we could indeed 'result' our pupils and that they would be certificated shortly afterwards.

The pupils enjoyed the course and many pupils and parents mentioned very positively the fact that the course carried formal certification. All pupils achieved the outcomes necessary for Access 2 or 3 and many achieved Intermediate I or II Core Skills. It is intended to continue with this initiative with the new S1 intake in August.

Summary

By the end of this session we should have a cohort of S1 pupils who:

- are confident users of hardware, software and the network
- have useful skills which other departments can harness
- have covered ICT work relevant to other subjects areas
- have been certificated in ICT Core Skills at the appropriate level.

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25 May 2006