LEADING PRIMARY COMPUTING

Neil Rickus discusses how guidance from Computing at School is supporting primary computing leads and explores some reflections from the community

As a subject, computing is vital for giving all children the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in our digital world. It is an essential subject within the school curriculum through its contribution to children's personal and intellectual development, their understanding of the world, and their future education and employability. Primary subject leaders for computing are vital catalysts for change in schools across the globe. It is under their leadership that every young person can begin to thrive within our digital society.

Leading computing can be daunting, especially for teachers without the subject knowledge. However, with support and encouragement from other subject leaders, teachers can feel empowered, equipped, and excited about the opportunity they have to shape the experiences of the young people in their care. This is exactly the aim of the *Computing at School (CAS) Leading primary computing: reflections from the subject leader community toolkit* (**helloworld.cc/primarytoolkit**) resource, which outlines case studies and recommendations from active practitioners across the computing community. Although the toolkit was developed in the UK, it can be used by schools globally, and most of the case studies and guidance are applicable to curriculum content around the world.

Toolkit development and aims

The toolkit was developed in conjunction with primary teachers and computing education experts to highlight good practice within schools when leading the subject. Throughout its development, CAS recognised that computing in primary schools is often led by non-specialists, so they took care to ensure that the guidance outlined is accessible and appropriate for teachers with limited computing experience and/or formal qualifications. For example, they sought case studies from those with significant experience in supporting non-specialist teachers in schools, with explanations of technical vocabulary and concepts where appropriate.

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Will Franklin: computing coordinator, Westdene Primary School, Brighton, UK

"As part of engaging families with the computing curriculum at Westdene, we run a number of different events, including:

- Online safety workshops for parents and carers, focusing on the technologies children typically use and how they can use them safely
- Coding competitions during Hour of Code (**hourofcode.com**), in which parents and carers are invited to take part and compete against each other
- Support sessions on how to use our online learning platform, including how to view work, access online resources, and submit completed assignments

"To engage with our local community, we collaborate with local schools to run Kidsmeet sessions, at which digital leaders from each school come together to take part in joint computing activities. This also provides an opportunity for the children to share their expertise with one another and examine how computing can be developed within the school. Finally, we also regularly reach out to local industry, which has involved partnering with MakerClub to run a school-based version of their popular after-school technology club."

The guidance aims to enable primary computing leads to develop their pedagogical and subject knowledge by engaging with appropriate learning opportunities. It spans the following areas:

- Computing subject leadership
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- Resourcing
- Enrichment
- Family and community engagement
- Diversity and inclusion
- Online safety

Subject leads can use the toolkit to help examine strategies for evidencing pupils' attainment; to increase their awareness of technology used by both pupils and parents; and to give them demonstrable expertise in the subject. The toolkit should also help subject leads to support other staff in the school in delivering excellent computing lessons and implementing appropriate

subject leads, or schools wanting to review their whole-school provision, might begin with using the complementary NCCE Computing Quality Framework

CASE STUDY EXAMPLE: LEADING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

Stella McCarthy: head of school and digital strategy lead, Dame Tipping Church of England Primary School, UK

"The key to leading the introduction of new technology in any school is ensuring teachers receive regular, high-quality CPD. Staff CPD needs to relate to both the tools available and to the associated pedagogy. In particular, through encouraging teachers to think about how they can use the tools and software available to them, they can enhance learning and teaching, plus see the benefits in the classroom.

"In addition to this, as computing coordinator, it is important you don't purchase or introduce anything new without being willing to learn how to use it effectively; then, once you have mastered it, be able to train all staff — preferably in small steps, with hands-on opportunities. Once appropriate hardware and software are in place, you can embed the use of technology across the whole curriculum. Effective CPD can therefore lead to intuitive use of technology for computing and across the whole curriculum."

Have you used the CAS toolkit? Did you find any of the case studies useful? I'd love to hear from you — get in touch via **@computingchamps** on Twitter. **(HW)**

" SUBJECT LEADERS CAN HELP TEACHERS TO FEEL EMPOWERED, EQUIPPED, AND EXCITED TO LEAD COMPUTING

cross-curricular links, while also enabling children to use technology safely and responsibly. Equipping subject leads and other teachers with these tools can then enable schools to develop their policies and procedures, such as those for online safety and safeguarding, alongside accessible curriculum content. This then ultimately supports pupils in making excellent progress within engaging computing lessons.

Using the toolkit
Depending on your school's current computing provision and the experience of the subject lead, you can use the guidance and case studies in a number of different ways. For example, new

(**computingqualityframework.org**) to review the school's existing computing provision. This will then enable them to identify focus areas linked to their curriculum and the school's priorities. The subject lead/school can then refer to the recommendations and case studies related to those focus areas and put development plans in place for their school as required. Finally, they can examine and record progress against each target they set for themselves in their development plan, such as every half term, with further focus areas looked into as appropriate. You can find a couple of examples of case studies in the boxouts, to get a flavour of the kind of support the toolkit offers.

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