Wellfield Middle School

Developing a modern IT workflow that makes lessons more efficient for teachers, students and technicians

For many schools, limited financial and technical resources mean students have to make do with one-off IT-focused lessons that don't reflect how they see technology used in their day to day lives. But by taking a flexible approach to 1:1 iPad deployment and using a few clever tricks to simplify device management, Wellfield Middle School were able to make IT an integrated part of the curriculum, improving engagement and saving valuable class time for teachers, technicians and the students themselves…

In a nutshell…

Who are they?

Wellfield Middle School is part of the North Tyneside Learning Trust. They serve over 300 students in Years 5 to 8.

What did they need?

Comprehensive device management for personal and school-owned devices – plus ongoing support should anything go wrong.

How did we help?

We set Wellfield up with Jamf School and our ongoing Device Support Service to ensure over 400 staff and student devices were managed – but we've also helped with everything purchasing portals to training, to convincing reluctant parents to get on board.

What were the benefits?

- A consistent user experience for all students, with fewer distractions and far more barriers to inappropriate content.

- Improved collaboration among teaching staff, thanks to shared apps and resources.

- More efficient management and troubleshooting of devices, freeing up Wellfield's IT staff to focus on other things.

Like many of the schools in the North Tyneside Learning Trust, Wellfield Middle School have a long history with Apple devices. They first started using iPad six years ago, after deciding that a class set of Chromebooks wasn't delivering the return on investment that they'd hoped.

"People would check the class set out and they'd end up getting lost or broken, partly because they were getting moved around the school so much and partly because nobody owned them or felt the need to take care of them," explained ICT Technician Bev Stephenson. "When people wanted to start an IT-driven lesson the children would have to come and get devices and bring them to class, then get logged in, and all that ate into the lesson time and was quite disruptive. We thought it was important that everyone have their own device in their hands, ready to use whenever they need it."

One of the keys to Wellfield's iPad rollout was they took a very flexible approach to providing iPad: parents could send their children to school with a device from home, lease an iPad through the school and pay the cost in instalments, or opt out of the scheme altogether, in which case the school would provide the pupil with a temporary access to a school-owned iPad.

But while having this mixture of devices helped the school ensure everyone had a device, it posed some challenges when it came to device management. Would students have to delete their personal apps before bringing a device to school? What happened if a device was lost or broken? What if a class needed a new app for a particular lesson? For the IT team at Wellfield, the answer was Jamf School.

JIGSAW24

Finding a full-school device management solution

The school had always used some device management tools, but as they rolled out iPad across all four year groups – over 400 devices total – they knew they would need something more robust.

"Previously we were using another device management solution that wasn't very intuitive," Bev explained. "There were a lot of rules that conflicted with each other, and we couldn't find out why things weren't working. So we moved to Jamf School about two years ago, just before COVID hit, and it works really well. It's intuitive, it's obvious what the software is doing and how it's working. And it's quick - if I unlock an iPad, it unlocks straight away, whereas with our earlier solutions you could be waiting five or ten minutes for each iPad to unlock. Jamf School just makes sense; it's really easy to use and I can navigate around it without fighting it."

Streamlining the classroom experience for every student

One of Bev and the Wellfield team's major achievements was figuring out how to deliver a consistent experience to all students, regardless of who their device ultimately belonged to.

"Jamf School allows you to apply profiles to devices based on their location or the time of day," Bev explains. "At 8.15 on a school day, every student iPad is locked into the same desktop, with the same apps in the same place, and all their games and personal apps hidden. Then at 3.15 when they leave school, everything reappears and they can use their iPad as normal."

Not only does this make life easier for teachers, who don't have to wait for students to find apps or functions on their particular device while giving instructions, it's also reduced distraction in the classroom by blocking access to apps like FaceTime and iMessage during school hours.

But what if, instead of blocking an app, teachers want to share more of them? It turns out Jamf School makes that equally easy. "If I had to go and install an app on each of our 400 iPads I'd never get anything done," says Bev, "but with Jamf School, if a teacher rings me and says 'I want to use a new app next lesson' I can have it on every iPad in that class in about ten minutes."

Recently, the school has begun to rely less on personal Apple IDs and more on managed Apple IDs administered by the school IT team (with help from Jigsaw24). Using managed IDs gives the school tighter control over which services and apps are available to students during the school day, and helps them ensure key work, documents and feedback are backed up to iCloud.

Helping teachers collaborate

Teachers at Wellfield also have their own iPads, which are equipped with Google Classroom, shared calendars and an electronic registration system. According to Bev, this has made it much easier for teachers to work together and stay organised, as "everyone always has an iPad in their hand, and from that you can see exactly what's going on at any time, or email with students if they need support, wherever you are in the school."

These tools really came into their own during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the school discovered it was "all set" to switch to remote teaching, as apps like Explain Everything and Google Classroom were already a part of students' and teachers' normal routine.

"Even in face to face lessons, if students need a dictionary they use the dictionary on the iPad. They'll take notes in the Notes app. The teacher will AirDrop a worksheet to them and then they'll just write straight on the worksheet on the iPad. They share resources back and forth through Google Classroom. So all the tools they needed to start remote learning were already in place."

This feeds into the school's larger goal of embedding IT skills into every element of the school day. "When we started our 1:1 scheme, the headteacher was very clear that she wanted students to see how ICT worked alongside everyday activities," explains Bev Stephenson. "It used to be that if you wanted to do something IT-related, you had to go to the IT room or book out a class set of devices, which took up a lot of lesson time and also marked the lesson out as 'an IT lesson', whereas now, it's just another tool that they use."

A one-stop IT partner

Jigsaw24 has been with Wellfield Middle School at every stage of their iPad journey, from building purchasing portals for parents to providing gap insurance on devices to holding pre-rollout training sessions for staff – in fact, our team of Apple-certified CPD providers includes staff who had formerly worked for the North Tyneside Learning Trust.

But our support team are also there to help if anything that goes wrong. While Wellfield has its own IT technicians who can handle day-to-day management of devices and troubleshoot common hardware problems, our Device Support Service for Schools service means that Bev can rely on our help if there are any recurring or far-reaching issues with the devices, their OS, or Jamf School itself. We can even help the school identify core apps that will help them reach their teaching goals, and manage the roll out of new apps to every device.

"We were keen to work with Jigsaw24 because they offered everything we needed – other vendors I spoke to didn't offer gap insurance for example – and because we knew about the work they'd done with other schools in our Trust. It's reassuring to have an IT partner who has that level of experience in education, and who can advise us on different options as things change."

To find out more about Jamf School and our support options, get it touch with the team on the details below.

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