

Devonport Boys High School

Impact portraits: Success stories with Google for Education

Devonport Boys High School (DHSB) in Plymouth, England, turned a problem with their email into a catalyst for a new style of learning. By putting technology in the hands of students and stepping aside to let them learn and teach themselves, DHSB became a model school for the deployment of Chromebooks to facilitate self-directed learning. It should be no surprise: DHSB was one of the first schools to deploy Google Workspace for Education and Chromebooks in the United Kingdom. From a more efficient administration to students who make their own websites to support classes, Devonport Boys High School made incremental gains to become a more collaborative, effective and dynamic learning environment for the 1,200 students in the school.

School facts (Public school)



Total enrollment

1,200 Students

160 Teachers



Years served

7>13



Google Workspace for Education tools used



Google tools

550–600 Chromebooks

4 years using Chromebooks

5 years using Google

Workspace for Education

100% Students using

Google Workspace for

Education



Why Chromebooks

Students meet online on their Chromebooks to discuss a club or society's development, creating notes which are then uploaded for all members to view.

This increase in classroom collaboration and peer communication resulted in a more open learning climate for all students.

Lesson formats are available online with resources and materials for the first time, so classes are no longer restricted to their one-hour time slot and teachers can provide follow-up tasks for students outside of class.

Results

The educational experience of Devonport students in school and at home was transformed after the introduction of Google Workspace for Education and Chromebooks. Now, teachers and students use Google Classroom to keep up-to-date on what is required, offer additional activities that stretch students, and seek out help. Teachers measure assessment through Google Docs and Forms, communicating with students through private chat channels to provide real-time feedback. They can easily check and record the progress of individual students completing specific pieces of work on a Google Doc or Form, offering support and advice to those who have not been active for a few days. The result? A more collaborative, positive working environment, with each teacher on a more even keel, able to utilise Google Workspace for Education in a way that best suits them.

increase in students accessing their accounts outside of school



Introduction

In 2011, with ailing email servers and desktops putting more obstacles than opportunity in the way of students and staff, Devonport School felt it could do better. The leadership team set about on an ambitious plan. After an initial implementation of Google Workspace for Education, the school introduced around 600 Google Chromebooks, putting more technology than ever before into the hands of students and teachers. The choice was a conscious one, involving the school's Pupil Premium funding to buy these Chromebooks for any students who couldn't afford them. "Historically, we bought iPads, but we can buy so many more Chromebooks than iPads, and do so much more as a result," says Ben Forte, Director of the Learning Commons at Devonport School. With over 1,200 students and 160 teaching staff, an overhaul of the entire existing system was going to be an ordeal. After the initial investment was in place, the school decided to bring about change one step at a time. Simple changes brought early wins, growing teacher confidence: the email server was replaced with Gmail, and Google Calendar was added as well, increasing the efficiency of day-to-day operations. Now, the school has deployed Chromebooks on a 1:1 basis.



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Ben Forte,
Director of the Learning Commons



Students as digital leaders

Whereas many schools might expect teachers to develop content to support home learning, students at Devonport took matters into their own hands. DHSB's student-run clubs and societies embraced Google Workspace for Education, so groups are better equipped to successfully run sessions and track attendance and progress. Students meet online using Google Hangouts to discuss their club or society's development, while Google Docs help them create notes which are then uploaded for all members to view. Each of the subject and department specific sites currently in operation at the school were built by students, including those for specific clubs, campaigns and trips. "Many clubs use Google Sites now, including the Biology Society, Chess Club, Astronomy Club, and the Debate Club. Clubs share everything from a calendar of events, to information and photos, and use Google Sites in their lessons to make an e-portfolio," says Forte.

A collaboration-first environment

Google Docs gave students a new opportunity for collaboration, and as a result, peer-to-peer feedback increased in both volume and quality. Students approach tasks together, sharing and communicating in real-time, gathering and formatting information using Slides and Forms, then commenting and advising on one another's work. This increase in classroom collaboration and peer communication resulted in a more open learning climate for all students, with every class and year group throughout the school learning in a renewed culture of feedback.



Students approach tasks together



Real-time communication



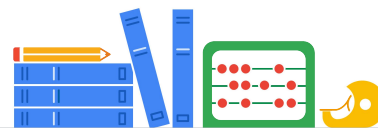
Comment on one another's work



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Involving parents

A number of departments created special online areas for parents where feedback and reports designed for them can be found through Google Sites. Informally called the “Parent Portal,” it includes updates and comments to inform parents of their child’s development, creating a positive relationship between the school and parents. For a number of departments, this is their main channel of communication with parents. The changes are not just limited to parents and the classroom. Using Google Calendar, agenda items for administrative meetings are clearer and easier to follow. The simplified system enables clearer communication between the team and the wider school community.

Frictionless learning

Much of the daily process of pedagogy, including administrative tasks, are completed more easily thanks to Google tools. Teachers track each student’s individual progress more efficiently, run group tasks with ease, and comment on work with pointers and feedback in real-time using Google Workspace for Education. Lesson formats are available online with resources and materials for the first time, and classes are no longer restricted to their one-hour time slot, so teachers can provide follow-up tasks for students to outside class. “Our psychology department got rid of their textbooks and made a Google Sites textbook instead, with video content, linked content, recordings of lessons on a whiteboard for later viewing, using all sorts of online tools and Google Forms to collect results. They now have an interactive textbook that they never would have had before,” says Forte.

