

# Making learning a magical experience



## Setting the Scene

A North London school once placed under 'special measures' by inspectors because of its poor performance has turned itself around. The transformation is all down to the hard work of the staff, pupils and parents.

Wykeham Primary School in Neasden, which has a number of refugees on its books and at which 50% of pupils speak English only as an additional language, is in an economically difficult area. The percentage of children eligible for school meals and with special educational needs is above the national average. And, like many schools, it has struggled to recruit teachers.

Wykeham does have several factors in its favour, however. The tremendous spirit and attitude of its teachers, the willingness of parents to help and the attitude of the children, for example. These qualities have helped the school come off its 'special supervision' order and go from strength to strength.

This is no mean feat. Brent's Chief Inspector of Schools, Rose Johnson, said: "It is not easy for a school to come off special measures. It can only be achieved by hard work of people who are committed to making a better school for pupils."

OFSTED inspectors put the transformation down to a rise in grades, better teaching and greater use of IT. Nothing demonstrates this better than the equipment the school installed in its ICT suite in 2002.

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**Coert Van Straaten,  
Wykeham Primary School,  
Neasden**

## The Situation

For years, ICT Co-ordinator Coert Van Straaten had relied on 'chalk and talk', an ordinary whiteboard and a projector. Children's attention spans were poor, classroom interactivity was low and boredom was high. Coert realised that something more interactive was required. He needed a new approach: it was time to take the technological plunge.

## The Solution

The school's funds were limited, so, when Hitachi Interactive approached the school and offered to sponsor a Cambridge interactive whiteboard, Coert had no hesitation in accepting.

"It was the new angle we were looking for," he said. "The children needed to be engaged much more in learning. We'd needed something much more interactive for a long time."

The whiteboard lives in the ICT suite, where it's become a firm favourite among the children from Reception right through to Year 6: "The whiteboard has made a massive difference - we've used it mainly for ICT but, the best thing is, it can be incorporated into any subject area. Now we're rolling it out for maths and history and other subjects too. It's amazing to see how the children respond. They think it works by magic," said Coert.

Wykeham uses its ICT board as a demonstration programme - teachers demonstrate and highlight topics -- such as a part of a software programme. "Also, children produce work on their PCs in the ICT suite, then demonstrate what they've done on the whiteboard in front of the class," Coert added. "We can save the demos and refer back to the work they did when they've made more progress. With that, the Internet and the ability to show videos, too, it's a great educational tool."



Linked to a PC and projector, the Cambridge board can help build exciting, dynamic and inspirational lessons. It can also capture pen strokes faster than most people can write. And, although the OFSTED team praised the behaviour of the Wykeham children, staff are no doubt grateful that the board is the most robust on the market.

There's no argument about the board's impact on lessons. However, that's not where the story ends. Wykeham has also discovered another use for the versatile whiteboard. It has proved ideal for teacher training too. Coert explained: "It's just got so many features. We can show teachers how to do something - for example, we can video them taking a PE lesson. Then we can run the video back on the big screen, and pause or annotate over the action. It's ideal."

Coert is just beginning to realise the potential of the board: "At the minute, we use it principally for ICT, but when we roll it out for all our subjects, it will continue to help our ever improving results and league-table positions." Now that really is magic.

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