

LEO Academy transforms learning and teaching with Google for Education

By migrating its staff and pupils onto G Suite for Education, the LEO Academy Trust has increased collaboration and cut down on paperwork across the board. It has also transformed its students' learning experience with Chromebooks, enabling 1:1 learning for every pupil. Moving to the cloud has prepared the Trust for the present need for distance learning, and has saved it £48,000 a year - money it will spend on further expanding its 1:1 programme.



The impact of G Suite for Education has been transformational. UK schools are struggling to innovate and provide their pupils with critical digital skills due to decades-old, ineffective IT estates. With the support of our partners and the latest tools from Google, we've been able to be more strategic with our digital planning. We're driving improvements and efficiencies without breaking the bank."

Phillip Hedger,
CEO of the LEO Academy Trust

1:1 learning, visibility and transparency are the immediate benefits of the LEO Academy Trust's digital transformation. It's a transition that has freed teachers up from paperwork, while giving pupils the tools to be creative. In the wake of COVID-19 school closures, it has also allowed teachers to continue their lesson plans, and students to get on with their studies outside the classroom, with minimal latency or interruption.

LEO Academy is a multi-academy trust that operates six schools across seven sites in the London Borough of Sutton, with 3,500 pupils and more than 400 staff. It is committed to excellence for all in every school it operates, and its board believed the cloud migration was crucial to their strategy. Moreover, it was key to giving their pupils the digital skills they need to succeed in the modern world.

With the digital sector now accounting for 7.7% of the UK economy, the Government has long since recognised that digital skills are an essential part of the UK's long-term economic success.

Previously, it was difficult for different teachers, schools and sites to collaborate. But now the Trust takes full advantage of G Suite for Education, which includes all the software needed for the classroom and collaboration - Google Classroom, Gmail, Google Calendar, along with Google Docs and Google Sheets functionality. With support and funding from the London Grid for Learning (LGfL) the school has invested in Chromebooks for its students. It has also breathed new life into its old computers by making them streamlined and secure with Neverware CloudReady technology.

Collaboration and Creativity

LEO Academy Trust's venture into digital learning has been a three-year journey. The first year was spent examining a broad range of options and consulting with the government, trust members, staff, parents and pupils. Common requests were for systems that foster collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, while promoting self-learning by the students.

The second year was spent preparing teachers for the transition to a digital way of working. At this stage, the Google Education team worked with staff to ensure they had all the right tools and training at their disposal.



We had to change the way teachers taught and pupils learnt,” says Mr Macaulay. “What we didn’t want to do was take a big leap into a digital technology solution that people didn’t use and just sat gathering dust in the corner of a room. We needed to make sure it was easy to adopt and use from day one. That’s why we introduced a phased approach that everyone was comfortable with.”

What staff wanted to do most was collaborate and share resources. The existing IT infrastructure prevented them from doing so. There was no shared platform or any way of sharing resources or best-practice.

The application of G Suite resolved all those problems. Teachers could now share lesson plans, access resources from LGfL and professional development training to help them get the most out of the new technology. With easy access to these resources, teachers now have more time to focus on improving their lesson plans.

One major benefit for teachers was that they could take their work home with them, meaning they didn’t have to stay late to finish up. Another benefit has been that they have been able to schedule lessons and assignments for their pupils during lockdown through Google Classroom. G Suite for Education has also allowed teachers to easily share remote learning tips and materials to the LEO Academy Trust website, providing open source teaching resources to schools across the country.



Extending the relationship between home and school

The third year of the plan saw the LEO Academy Trust invest in more than 600 Chromebooks for year 4 pupils across all its schools, and begin the 1:1 Chromebook programme - one device for every pupil in the year. As LEO Academy Trust schools prepared to close, educators surveyed families to find out which students lacked online access or devices. The Trust ensured those families received a take-home Chromebook, and a WiFi connection device if needed.

The programme has enabled a much more fluid approach to learning. The children enjoyed the collaborative approach through G Suite where they could share ideas in a secure environment. LEO Academy Trust also provides continuous online technical support for parents and guardians who have questions about the Chromebooks and educational software their children are using.

Feedback on tests and homework has been much quicker. Teachers can now mark work in the cloud and provide almost instant feedback to their pupils. What's more, results are electronically compiled, making it much easier to highlight areas that individual pupils need to focus on.

"I enjoy learning with my Chromebook because, for me, I find it easier to type and I can easily send my work to my teacher from a distance and in just a click," Abiksha, a Year 4 Pupil at LEO Academy says.

Mr. Macaulay adds: "There is a buzz and excitement around these classrooms now and it has increased pupil engagement. Going one-to-one has also helped us extend the reach of

the classroom. Pupils are much more likely to take their Chromebooks home and continue learning, while parents can easily check on their progress and the feedback they've been getting for their work."

After this success, the Trust now plans to extend the 1:1 programme. From September 2020, every KS2 pupil will be given their own Chromebook to use in school and at home.

Building Digital Leaders

Pupils who took quickly to Chromebooks and are adept at learning have been assigned as 'digital leaders' across the schools. Their job is to help other pupils learn how to use the technology.

The digital leaders were invited to speak at the BETT educational conference last year and attended the Chromebook Summit in September. The Trust is aiming to appoint more digital leaders in the future. In the meantime, it also hopes the digital learning initiative will help the Trust continuously improve English and Maths standards.



The adoption of Chromebooks and G Suite has opened the world to a whole new way of learning, one that is collaborative, creative and always accessible. It has challenged the students and teachers to think differently about how they approach the classroom, and created a buzz of excitement in the school. It could not have gone better for us," says Mr. Macaulay.