

## A Case Study on using Scoilnet Blogs for our School Website.

Sinéad Counihan, a teacher in St. Damian's NS, Walkinstown, writes about creating her school's blog: [www.scoildamian.scoilnet.ie/blog](http://www.scoildamian.scoilnet.ie/blog) having undertaken the NCTE Web 2.0 course *Creating Your School Website using Scoilnet Blogs*.

All classes in the school are using the blog with teacher aid, which means we have 250 students participating in one way or another.

The blog was created shortly before the summer of 2009. I needed to reduce the work load for myself as the teacher in charge of the website. I used to use *Dreamweaver* for the school website and it would be up to me to create the webpages for all the classes, which was very time consuming. Using Scoilnet blogs, all the individual teachers are now responsible for having a web presence for their own class....and my life has become easier.

We are still experimenting with all its possible uses. So far we've used it for:

- Displaying success stories in all curricular areas for example achievements like Science Award of Excellence, Bí Gnóthach Merit Award, winning in sporting events.
- English - It has been used in junior classes to write daily news etc.. We are lucky and have IWBs and can use these for whole class activities.
- Fifth class have created games based on the SESE work done during the year and use the blog to access the games created, both in class in the computer suite and at home as a means of revision. We've just started but would hope to continue to create these. The children themselves want to create a whole set for tables practice, they've only started but it will continue as a sixth class project next year. It can then be accessed by all and used as a class or home resource.
- Students have uploaded their own poems in school.

### Using the Blog?

The blog has been used as a whole class teaching tool, children have also worked in groups, pairs and as individuals.

Teachers use it to showcase work done and share pictures of events e.g. school tours.

Parents can see what's going on and they are kept up-dated.

'Comments' can be left on the blog but are monitored by teachers with accounts.

### **Advantages of having the Blog?**

As a learning tool it is motivational and the children themselves like seeing what's going on in the school in terms of the other classes. Classes can also leave comments on the work of other classes too and using our IWBs this can be done as a whole class activity.

Fifth class used the quizzes created as a revision tool both in school and for those who have home internet access. At least 80% of students have access at home. The students themselves came up with the idea of making quizzes for learning tables.

For the senior classes it is envisioned that next year they would be the main people uploading to the blog (under teacher supervision). At this stage only some of them have but the blog is definitely a useful tool for teaching computer skills.

### **Advantages for me as Website Admin?**

As a teacher, it has definitely cut down on the work required to keep the website up-to-date. I just need to create the dozen pages or so involving the whole school rather than 50 pages to show what each individual class is doing. We as a school are at the beginning of a learning curve and are still experimenting and making mistakes. I'm regularly in touch with the NCTE to solve problems e.g. learn how to include the widgets properly into the site. We need a way to showcase pictures as a gallery page rather than as posts on the main page. At the moment if lots of pictures are uploaded they move all other posts off the page. I'm sure we'll get to grips with it and we're only starting out. The staff is enthusiastic about it and can see its huge potential.

### **Any feedback?**

There are some Web 2.0 concerns about internet safety but we have had a website up and running for over 5 years and our AUP and strategies for internet safety on our website essentially transfer over to use on the blog.

The comment facility of course is new, however, it will be moderated by teachers before any are posted. It is nice to get feedback directly from children and parent and this is another method.

## DEVELOPING e-LEARNING IN YOUR SCHOOL

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The blog allows parents in particular access to the children's education in a way they have never experienced before. Our principal has left comments and from the feedback I've had from teachers in the school, this was really appreciated by the junior classes in particular. So far all comments have been very positive and show the school blog is also being accessed at home by parents and students.

St. Damian's school blog is only up and running a month at the time of writing this but already the school is looking forward to see where it takes us next year.