

The Snaith School Using GCSEPod to impact revision and exam results

The Snaith School in the East Riding of Yorkshire was already a high performing specialist coeducational academy. But the first time Head of Geography, Dave Nichols, saw GCSEPod he knew it could be the means to take the school to even loftier heights. Securing the funding in these cash-strapped times was another matter. Help was to come from an unexpected source, his students and their parents.

It was a moment worthy of the Oscars.

Dave Nichols, Subject Leader of Geography at the Snaith School, was in the midst of a tough assignment: persuading the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to release funding for a GCSEPod subscription. Having already trialled the award-winning resource within his own department to great success - capturing the imagination of his colleagues along the way - he knew rolling GCSEPod out to all students across all subjects could be the key to unlocking even more potential at what is already a high achieving secondary school.

It is no secret that budgets in educational establishments are at breaking point as Dave explains; "School budgets are shrinking. I put GCSEPod forward to the SLT, and I have to say that at no time was I told I couldn't have it. But the SLT are the purse string holders, and to ask them to

dip into the budget for something new like GCSEPod at a time when there are so many other calls on that money, is a hard sell."

Dave had an ace up his sleeve. In a bid to further support his case he had asked his students to feedback what turned out to be their overwhelming support for GCSEPod. Many parents voluntarily gave their backing too. So it was that Dave found himself clutching a shiny gold envelope containing what he hoped would be the winning shot in his argument in favour of GCSEPod.

Inside was one parent's summation of the positive impact GCSEPod had had on her daughter in just a few short weeks. It read: "Dear The Snaith School. I have recently been shown by my daughter (a current year 10 pupil) a fantastic revision/learning tool called GCSEPod. I feel this system would be an excellent learning tool and investment for your school.

"I was very impressed with how many subjects and topics are available to look at; step by step learning guides! I feel this would prove an invaluable source for learning for all abilities and make each

subject more accessible. In my opinion this is a must purchase for the school!"

In all, around 40 students and parents stepped-up to support Dave. It did the trick. In May 2018 The Snaith School started a curriculum-wide subscription to GCSEPod.

While only weeks before the end of the summer term the system, which has been designed to appeal to today's tech-savvy teenagers, became an instant hit with Year 9-11 students and their teachers.

The school, which has nearly 1,000 pupils aged 11-16 on its books drawn from mainly rural communities around the town of Snaith, quickly became one of the top GCSEPod users in the country. Between May and the end of June, a staggering 24,136 pods were streamed.

The biggest impact has been on exam results, however, especially in Geography where students were trialling GCSEPod before it was opened up to other departments.

Dave says: "It helped massively in Geography. In the run-up to the exams,





we were watching between 300-400 pods a day outside of school. Our subject development compared to the rest of the school was noticeable.

"Our progress in the Attainment 8 measure in Geography for the 73 students who entered the GCSE, came in at 33.8% at grades 7, 8 and 9, compared to 11% nationally in the same subject and over the same scores.

"I don't think you can get good results without excellent teaching, but when you combine that with the GCSEPod, it gives the students the peace of mind, security and confidence they need to perform well."

Other departments took full advantage of access to GCSEPod in the limited time leading up to the exams. "Between the eve of the English exam and the day of the GCSE itself, 1,800 pods were watched," Dave says. "The English department has really taken GCSEPod to heart and run with it. It's having a huge impact on the school."

Dave had first come across GCSEPod in November 2017 when he attended a PiXL (Partners in Excellence) Geography conference in London. "I had been looking for something like GCSEPod. I could see its potential straight away. There are others who do similar things, but they concentrate on one subject. To have access to a package that covers every exam board, so many curriculum areas, and develops student understanding and knowledge in the way GCSEPod does, is fantastic. As a teacher, it is what I had been crying out for.



"GCSEPod has become my baby, I absolutely love it and schools should have had it years ago."

Dave Nichols, Head of Geography



It is different and engaging vehicle for getting through to pupils. The majority of students use their phones all the time; they are welded to them 24/7. If that is their preferred method of communication, then we need to go with it.

"The Pods are only three to five minutes bursts of concentrated information that students can watch anywhere, anytime, whether walking home from school or travelling on the bus. The one thing that keeps coming back from students is that GCSEPod is like having a teacher in your pocket"

GCSEPod is proving especially beneficial for SEN students and others who have traditionally found it difficult to engage with education.

Dave cites the case of one pupil. "We have a student who listens to the pods whilst he's out walking his dog. He does that twice a day for around 20 minutes each time, and he says he's doing more revision than he ever would have".

Students have needed little persuasion to buy into GCSEPod thanks to the punchy, visually appealing and easily digestible way information is presented.

Homework with instant feedback can be set based on targeted areas. Content for a given exam can also be downloaded to individual devices as a playlist, making it easier and more efficient to prepare.

Dave says 'pupil power' has played an important part in what are still early days for GCSEPod at the school. "A lot of it started off with my lessons with students saying how good it was and telling all their friends. Teenagers tend to take everything a teacher says with a pinch of salt, but if it's your friends telling you something is good it's a different story."

Dave may be the school lead on GCSEPod, but he is happy to let the students blaze the trail amongst themselves. Healthy competition is building up amongst the children to see who can watch the most pods.

Before the end of the summer term, Dave began publicising the top five users on the school's Twitter feed every week, which saw pupils vying to get their name on the social media roll call.

In February 2019, The Snaith School will be joining the Education Alliance Multi Academy Trust. It already has three other schools under its wing, none of which as yet use GCSEPod. But Dave's enthusiasm for the tool is already sparking interest.

"GCSEPod has become my baby," he says with a laugh. "I absolutely love it and schools should have had it years ago."

