



MANOR CROFT ACADEMY

Revitalising students' thirst for knowledge with GCSEPod

Manor Croft Academy in West Yorkshire is reaping the benefits of embracing the online teaching and learning platform GCSEPod, which has revitalised their students' thirst for knowledge just weeks after being introduced to the school.

Not too long ago, schools were doing all they could to get their tech-hungry students to switch off their smartphones and tablets and turn back to more traditional methods of learning.

But students at Manor Croft Academy in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, are being actively encouraged to get smart with their phones and iPads – with the blessing of teachers and parents.

The 700-strong coeducational academy for 11 to 16-year-olds introduced the online GCSEPod teaching and learning platform into the curriculum at the start of the 2018-2019 academic year.

And within weeks of adopting the resource, it had already had a phenomenally positive impact on Manor Croft's Year 9, 10 and 11 students. The school's Vice Principal, physics teacher and GCSEPod lead, Kion Nikoumaram, explains.

"There are a lot of students who are mid to lower achieving who have really got into GCSEPod. Our high achievers are using it, and you would expect that. But we have found that a lot of students who wouldn't usually engage with traditional teaching methods are really engaging with this," Kion says.



"When we have looked at who has watched the most Pods (the name given to GCSEPod's short three to five minute online revision videos), it has been interesting to see it is these mid to lower achieving students who are among the most prolific users."

GCSEPod has become such a popular teaching and learning tool at Manor Croft, that by the end of November 2018 the Pods, which can be easily watched on a smartphone or tablet and cover 20+ subjects and all the major exam boards, had been viewed a staggering 45,000 times by students in the upper three years.

With this in mind, it's no wonder that Manor Croft had shot to the top of the Pod Games league - the competitive contest run by GCSEPod that ranks schools by the number of videos watched, with awards and prizes presented to the winners regionally and nationally.

GCSEPod is playing a central role in what has been an astonishing turnaround for Manor Croft – one of nineteen Delta Academies Trust secondary schools.

In 2015, Ofsted judged Manor Croft as requiring improvement. But following much hard work on the part of teachers and the Delta Academies Trust - which took control

of the school in 2015 - a subsequent Ofsted inspection in 2017 rated Manor Croft 'good with outstanding leadership.' Kion sees GCSEPod as an essential component in the school's ongoing success.

"For students, for teachers and for parents, if you look at the exam predictions, then GCSEPod is going to play a big part moving forward. It is already playing a big part, and we are seeing positive results in terms of student buy-in and achievement."

It was a teacher from another school who alerted Kion to GCSEPod's existence.

"They were very impressed with it, so I went off and explored what GCSEPod could offer us. Ironically, around the same time we were contacted by Delta asking if we had heard about this wonderful learning resource called GCSEPod, and did we want to think about introducing it into the school? But by then we had already decided to subscribe.

"For us, GCSEPod perfectly fitted into everything we wanted to achieve. We wanted something that could sit successfully alongside the other online resources we already use in school, that would allow students to work independently at home, and that wouldn't increase teachers' workload. GCSEPod ticked all the boxes."





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Thanks to GCSEPod's easy to use format, staff too have responded with enthusiasm.

“All departments are united in setting four Pods a week. Some teachers will also set questions,” Kion explains. “We currently have an extremely successful initiative running called Pod Points, where students must watch a video and then write down three Pod points in their workbooks.

These are essentially three facts they have learned from the Pod, ready to discuss in lessons.”

Student interest has shown no signs of wavering. Kion says: “Manor Croft has a clear focus on progress, and therefore students

are keen to see improvement. It helps that students can complete homework via GCSEPod and that staff can duplicate these assignments and test knowledge again the next week or later in the year.

“We also have a leader board for the top Pod users with regular rewards. The top 10 are our 'Pod Squad', with the top three being awarded a 'Tri Pod' prize.

“But at the end of the day, it is not about prizes. It is about students being motivated to work and not having a requirement to have everything fed to them. And thankfully, they genuinely enjoy using it. It is a natural progression of

something they already do – watching videos on their phone or tablet. They can watch three or four videos a week and get a massive amount out of them. From the teaching perspective this is fantastic, as thanks to GCSEPod students now come to class already armed with knowledge which allows you to make quicker progress and reach higher.

“Some students are even getting ahead of the game with their Pod viewing.”

Technology is often decried, but GCSEPod is proof that for teachers and students alike, if used wisely, going online can open up a whole new world of hands-on, minds-on learning.

