



Bishop Creighton Academy:

# From Special Measures to Showcase School

When Vicki Redhead became principal at Bishop Creighton Academy (BCA) in Peterborough in April 2015, she faced a challenging journey out of Special Measures. With above-average numbers of disadvantaged pupils, students with SEN or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, the school, which had joined the Greenwood Academies Trust (GAT), was ripe for investment and transformation. Over the course of the next five years, the school would undertake a remarkable journey, powered in large part by the impact of technology in the classroom.

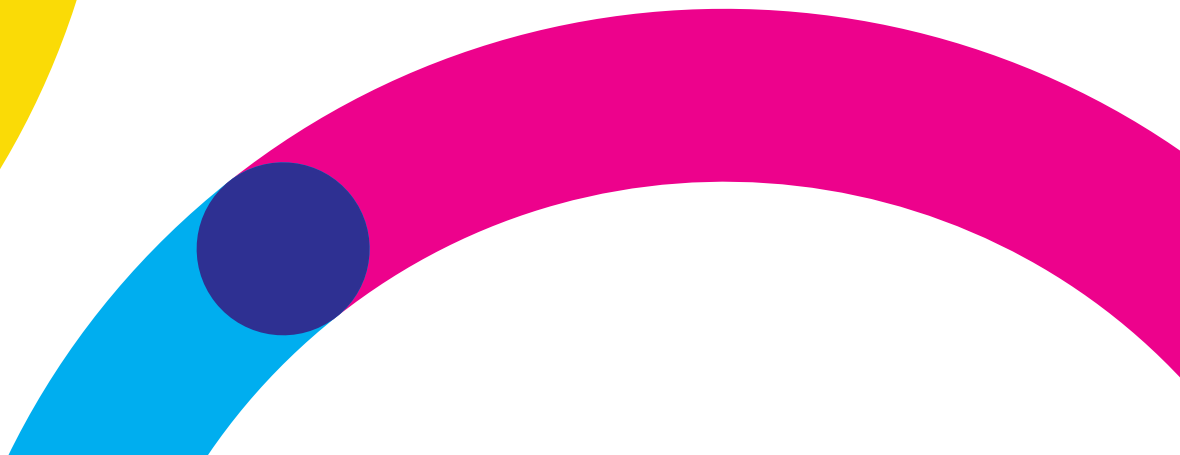
From the outset, Vicki and her team worked relentlessly to change the ethos of the school and put in place sound teaching and learning practices at the heart of the pupil experience. In May 2018, the school joined the GAT Digital system, which Vicki describes as "...being given a remarkable gift. I wanted staff and pupils to benefit."

Historically, IT use had been limited to desktop PCs running a small range of learning packages. However, pupils' clear willingness to work with technology – and the resulting increase in engagement – was a positive sign. Initially, the school invested in laptops on a 1:2 basis and Trust-led training in the Microsoft Office 365 suite was rolled out.

## Collaborating. Training. Learning.

Early gains came from collaboration through Teams and OneDrive. Suddenly, sharing and collaborating on documents became quick and easy. Staff felt empowered by the changes, which rapidly gathered pace once the school was invited to join the Microsoft Showcase Schools pathway, along with membership of Microsoft's Educator Community, the MEC.

This was a critical stage in the journey, as Vicki committed all staff to engaging with personalised development through the MEC, each aligned to their own areas of interest and teaching practice, which helped colleagues to fully engage with the process.





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### Investing in success

By early 2019, the lead teacher of Year 6 was reporting that the use of OneNote for lesson planning and delivery was leading to time savings and greater levels of engagement from pupils – and all devices were moved into the Year 6 classrooms to further improve individual access to technology. Meanwhile, a further set of laptops was purchased for Year 5, and budgeting implemented to ensure that the programme could roll down to Years 3 and 4 in time.

Progress continued apace. By March 2019, all Year 5 and 6 lessons were being planned and delivered through a single OneNote canvas. Marking and feedback were done online, and paper exercise books were replaced by digital ones. Teachers saved time as technology cut out the need for laborious low-level admin tasks - and instead this saved time was spent on lesson planning and feedback.

Pupils also began engaging with their work outside of school. They collaborated with each other, responded to teacher feedback and set quizzes for one another using MS Forms at home. The most able pupils supported those who were struggling and a team approach to school work led to greater engagement and positivity in the face of looming SATs. Meanwhile, the school addressed technology access issues at home with a combination of early morning opening and a nightly homework club.

### A powerful learning tool

To Vicki and her team, EdTech is a tool for learning, not a panacea for school improvement. Early work to stabilise the school, change its ethos and secure the quality of teaching in class meant that BCA was able to use the latest tech to its fullest potential; increasing pupil engagement with the aim of improving outcomes.

As pupils have become more engaged, SAT results have improved. The May 2019 results showed a 26% rise on the academy's previous three-year average. And by summer 2019, EdTech was securely embedded in literacy, numeracy, themed lessons and homework activities. Now, as Bishop Creighton Academy looks ahead, its next step is to infuse technology through the creative arts subjects, with plans at an advanced stage to work with a Virtual Reality Artist to create a virtual sculpture park in the school grounds. Bishop Creighton's journey with EdTech continues.

### Learnings from Bishop Creighton Academy

- Be clear about what you want to achieve. Priorities differ depending on your own situation – so choose what will work for you
- See IT as a tool to help you, not a cure-all
- Nothing can replace strong leadership and clarity over what makes great teaching and learning
- Go on the journey yourself. While you can learn from others, you need to invest your own time and energy – particularly when it comes to engaging with the Microsoft Educator Community.



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