



CASE STUDY

Programme impact in Northern Ireland.

"Within the very short period of time of two years the Digital Schoolhouse programme has impacted on approximately one third of all the primary schools in Northern Ireland.

The absence of a local government for almost 3 years has meant a lack of funding for professional development of teachers. Existing funding for computing from industry has been focused on the development of resources and teacher professional development for those undertaking GCE A-Level Digital Technology, GCE Software Systems Development or GCSE Digital Technology. While this has a speedy impact for those pupils moving to higher or further education it has resulted in a neglect of professional development particularly in the primary and KS3 areas of education. Therefore, the very timely introduction of DSH to Northern Ireland two years ago allowed and facilitated continued progression within the primary and KS3 education sectors. To date the current 5 Digital Schoolhouse schools have facilitated over 150 workshops reaching over 5800 children, their teachers and classroom assistants.

Additionally, most DSH Lead teachers have chosen to run a 'showcase' training event for teachers from their local learning community. This not only contributes to building a community of practice of primary teachers for computing but fulfils our Learning Leaders Strategy (2015). Without DSH these pupils and teachers would not have received any professional development.

The Digital Schoolhouse resources and learning style are now fully incorporated into the Education Authority STEM Professional Development Courses delivered through Stranmillis University College. This ensures a continuing expanse of the Digital Schoolhouse approach to computing and computational thinking into the primary schools and promotes the growth of the DSH Learning Communities. An additional group of 30 primary schools undertaking professional development through the Education Authority route will be trained in the Digital Schoolhouse approach to computing and computational thinking in October 2019.

The DSH Lead Teachers in Northern Ireland are all well qualified secondary computing teachers who now have the additional skills of delivering basic computing in a playful approach relevant to primary pupils thanks to the high quality training they have received at the ingenuity days. The Lead teachers have demonstrated flexibility in their mode of delivery ensuring that rural schools also receive training. The Lead Teachers are also utilising their 6th form pupils to reduce the pupil/tutor ratio within workshops.

During the academic year 2017-2018 the British Computer Society in Northern Ireland established an 'IT Educator of the Year Award'. The winners of this award for the past two years have been Digital Schoolhouse Lead Teachers for the impact their work has had in schools in Northern Ireland."

Dr Irene Bell, Stranmillis University
July 2019

Education and Training Inspectorate (2015): Learning Leaders: An evaluation of Department of Education's Strategy on Teacher Professional learning. Accessed: 4/7/19.

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/learning-leaders-an-evaluation-of-department-of-educations-strategy-on-teacher-professional-learning.pdf>

