



## My Glow Kenny Stewart



I'm Principal Teacher of Computing and ICT at Grove Academy in Dundee. The roll is 900 to 1,000 and growing. We're reaching the halfway stage of a new build, so we're currently undergoing a transition period.

I believe we are quite a progressive school, so Glow provides us with an opportunity to build on the good practice we already have in place. However, to make full use of Glow requires a change in mindset. We need to look again at how we organise our daily activities, and embrace a different way of working. For example, instead of going to the staffroom to pick up documents, these will be available to view or download from Glow. More and more information will begin its life in a digital form. One of the benefits of this system is that we could potentially make the material available 24/7 via Glow.

### **Glow – the story so far**

We launched Glow in our school at a recent in-service day. A staff tutor started off by giving the perspective from the local authority point of view and covered the use of Glow in general terms. I then delivered a presentation which looked at Glow from the school's point of view. At this inset, all staff were given their identity and password and invited to try it out, with support, in the afternoon.

The main point I tried to make is that Glow really is 'something completely different' – a truly innovative project. Glow is the only national schools intranet in the world, which is quite a remarkable achievement for a small country.

One of the first steps for us (as a school) will be to explore the different types of tools available and to give people an idea of what they will be able to do.

An important consideration is that individuals will have different starting points and different ideas about what they want to do with Glow. We will give people suggestions, directions and support and it's really up to them how they want to approach it. It's very much the case that people will use Glow in whatever way best fits their environment.

Again, the Monty Python phrase 'something completely different' comes into play. A change of mindset is mandatory to make the best use of this innovative new initiative – after all, we live in an age with changing demands for curriculum and methodology.

For my part, I have already taken part in a pilot project that looked at how Glow Learn could facilitate learning and teaching. There are three main aspects to Glow Learn – plan and organise content, teach a class and monitor and mark pupils' work.

The first task was to create the content for a lesson. The main content, most of which already existed in digital media, was uploaded and pupils were given lesson activities to work through. It is very easy to create links to existing resources (websites or documents) which can help cater for a wide range of learning styles. It gave some of my S3 pupils a chance to use Glow Learn and the feedback received was very encouraging. The big plus for me was personalisation – pupils can choose how they want to learn and of course they may be able to continue their learning at home. That sense of responsibility for their own learning was something pupils really seemed to value.

## What's next?

Our use of Glow falls into two parts. First of all, there is information management. Every bit of paper we currently send around school could be incorporated into Glow. That includes the absence sheet, bulletin, minutes of meetings, exam diets, calendar, etc. I created a Home Page with an introductory message, added some details in the calendar and set up links to the school bulletin and absence sheet, so that they could be accessed by staff on a daily basis.

Another idea was to populate our 'Grove Academy Home Page' with links to sites for formative assessment, various online resources regularly used and a link to the Eco-Schools Travel Survey being conducted with parents of S2 pupils. What we're creating is a one-stop shop – instead of going to the pigeonhole, people will get into the habit of using Glow. We'll also be making use of Glow Mail within Dundee – so this will be another first step.

The second aspect will be learning and teaching. As mentioned above, we have already piloted Glow Learn, outlining the ways it can be used to produce lessons and hold them online for pupils to access at home and in school.

In future I'm planning to make greater use of Glow Learn for sharing good practice. I'd like to develop a framework and a climate where people can share developments and materials and good resources will naturally evolve.

I'm now looking forward to discovering more about the tools. In particular I plan to explore Glow Groups, examining not only their applications for learning, but also looking at how they can be used to get as many people involved in the school's decision-making process as possible. The discussion option within a group and the presence of Glow Meet appear to provide the basic elements of a social network.

## Lighting up learning

To my mind, the biggest benefit of Glow is that it facilitates the sharing of good practice. It's very easy to migrate to Glow, and it's always going to be available, any time and any place. It could even lead to parents getting more involved in their children's education. It opens up new pathways and new perspectives. Surely that is what constructivism is all about?

*Curriculum for Excellence* is about breaking down the boundaries between different subjects and disciplines, and that's what Glow does – it makes connections across the divisions and even across schools.

The key message I would pass on from my experiences with Glow so far is that, as with any new teaching aid, some time needs to be set aside to get to grips with it. The first impression must be a favourable and lasting one, so start with small steps and provide adequate support. Be prepared to set aside some time to try this out – the benefits far outweigh the time investment. Remember, once a lesson has been created it is there for as long as you need it, and it can be shared with everyone! Networking par excellence.

