



My Glow Jaye Richards



I teach Biology and Psychology in Cathkin High School, which is in Cambuslang in South Lanarkshire. We have just under 1,000 pupils, encompassing a broad mix of socio-economics and academic ability.

Our local authority was an early adopter of Glow, and I have been working on its roll-out since April last year. It's significant that I'm not a computing teacher. Glow is a great base for all staff to start from – it's not just for ICT enthusiasts.

Glow – the story so far

I have spent the past year exploring Glow in the context of learning and teaching, looking at how it can be applied in the classroom and pushing it out amongst like-minded colleagues. I encouraged each department to nominate someone to attend Glow masterclasses then roll it out in their subject area. As a result, we have formed a small working group tasked with moving the initiative forward. I think of it as a ripple effect, and I'm the stone that set it moving!

I started to road-test Glow with my class in December 2007. I have dedicated one third of my pupils' teaching time to Glow, during which pupils will log on and work through a series of activities ranging from independent learning tasks to large-scale collaborative projects.

One of our most successful Glow projects examined the effects of water pollution in the Yangtze River in Asia, the River Don in Sheffield and the Gulf of Mexico through studying and comparing media ranging from videos and podcasts to newspaper articles. The pupils took the theory they had learned in class and applied it to each area, explaining what was happening and posting their work on the discussion board. The Glow project was enormously successful in reinforcing the pupils' learning objectives and making classroom theory 'real' in the world.

Key to our activities at present is trialling Glow's applications in the classroom and getting all the elements working well together.

What's next?

I'm going to Finland soon and I plan to teach lessons from Helsinki using Glow Meet. That's the scale of communication Glow makes possible. I was particularly impressed to hear recently of a colleague in South Lanarkshire who is using Glow Chat and discussion forums to teach children in Shetland about space. Projects such as these highlight Glow's incredible potential. We have plans to use Glow to collaborate with other schools, and I will be exploring these in more depth on my return from Finland.

Looking ahead, Glow will save me time that I can put back into teaching. I already have a whole series of biology lessons planned ahead through Glow. This enables me to focus my attention where it's needed instead of taking a broad brush approach, and that's bound to raise attainment.

Lighting up learning

Curriculum for Excellence and Glow were made for each other. *Curriculum for Excellence* is about how we teach, not what we teach. It's about transferable skills, about moving forward, and that's what Glow helps us to achieve.

To me, the main advantage is that Glow empowers students, shifting the power balance away from the traditional teacher-pupil relationship. I'm no longer a didactic dispenser of knowledge – I am a learning facilitator in the classroom.

Glow is a massive project, the first of its kind in the world, so I would advise all my colleagues to take the time to master it. Persevere and make this learning and teaching tool work for you.

