

For immediate release
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UWE and Radio in Schools prepare future generations for the digital age

The University of the West of England has been working closely with Radio in Schools to help improve speaking and listening skills of young children across all ages. The work neatly addresses key objectives in the recent government Digital Britain Report that calls for a drive to improve new media skills for future generations.

Radio in Schools is a national podcasting platform that promotes speaking, listening and creativity for the download generation. It provides teachers and pupils a safe platform to showcase their work, space to store files and strong links to the professional radio industry. Schools can showcase the best podcasts on their very own Radio in Schools home page, link these to their school website, as well as engage parents and local communities.

In the Education chapter of the Digital Britain Report published in June 2009, Sir Jim Rose summarises the importance of developing key media skills, he says:

“Used well, technology strongly develops the study and learning skills children need now and in the future..a reasonable grasp of ICT is needed in education and employment, and it will become increasingly important to command ICT skills to prepare for technologies of the future. The foundations for this engagement are best formed in primary schools, where children’s enthusiasm for ICT is evident.”

Working in collaboration with Heart, one of the UK’s biggest Radio brands, the scheme is designed to give children the opportunity to learn more about broadcasting and communication. A side product of this is that those who take part develop their confidence in speaking and writing and this has been shown to have a profound effect on their self esteem.

Jane Carter, Senior Lecturer in Primary Education at UWE has worked with Radio in Schools to develop the lesson plans used by teachers in schools. Jane explains:

“Radio is the perfect vehicle for developing talk, the careful consideration of composition, vocabulary choice and it encourages reflection on audience and purpose.

“Providing children with real life experience to develop these skills is hugely significant both in respect of Primary and Secondary National Strategies for the development of literacy skills and in terms of developing good self esteem. What has struck me most in working with children in local schools is the sheer enthusiasm. The children have a real audience and a real sense of purpose and it’s great to see some of the ideas that have come as a result of their motivation. A group of reception children has created Minibeast FM. Another group from Burnbush Primary School in Bristol used the resource to create podcasts about being evacuated during World War School.”

Jane emphasised that the resource has had a fantastic impact on the children beyond literacy development and that some children who had become disengaged from their studies had especially benefited from taking part.

The programme has been successfully used by schools nationwide and is expanding all the time. Chris Unsworth, the IT Coordinator at Stoke Bishop Primary School in Bristol has used the programme with all children in the school from Reception to Year Six.

Chris explains:

“We’ve been using Radio in Schools across all year groups at Stoke Bishop Primary School since November 2008. It’s been a wonderful stimulus for the children who are inspired by the link with Heart Radio and especially good for some boys who were

previously reluctant learners.

“The programme has had immeasurable success at building children’s confidence in written work and also had a surprising benefit in helping with our communications with parents. We were delighted that one of our pupils, Susanna Paynter won the Weather kid competition run by Heart Radio recently. In fact the project has been so successful across all curriculum areas that now children want to turn everything into a pod cast. It’s brilliant!”

Melissa Thom from Radio in Schools said:

“We are delighted to have the University of the West of England on board as our key education partner. The Radio in Schools service is just so versatile and aims at bringing down barriers to entry for all. By using the unique Virtual Studio – a worldwide first - Radio in Schools enables young people to experience the excitement and sense of achievement that comes from planning and producing a podcast.

“We look forward to developing the link over the coming years as there is great potential for this tool to be integrated into teacher training and for celebratory events that acknowledge children’s achievement.”

Dr Richard Eke, Joint Head of Academic Developments, said:

“Jane Carter and Melissa Thom have worked together on various projects over the years and the fusion of Jane’s literacy expertise and the Radio in Schools service makes for a winning combination leading to great opportunities for children and students to develop and hone their new media and broadcasting skills. In this UWE can play a key role in helping the government drive and ambition to ensure that there is a healthy pipeline of talent to fuel the Digital Age”.

To find out more www.radioinschools.co.uk

Digital Britain Report http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/6216.aspx

For links to work by children at Stoke Bishop Primary School please see <http://www.stokebishoppriamry.ik.org/>

Gingerbread Man podcasts
<http://www.stokebishop.bristol.sch.uk/page36a.html>

Stoke Bishop FM
http://www.stokebishoppriamry.ik.org/p_Radio_SB.ikml

Weather Kid page with podcast and footage from the live broadcast
<http://www.stokebishop.bristol.sch.uk/page65.html>