

Broadband Sandwell Newsletter Number 3, Spring 2011

Some Diary Dates

- A reminder of the CLC's Primary ICT co-ordinators event which is on Thursday 10th Feb, contact Pat Poyner at Shaftesbury House to book a place.
- End of year arrangements: We close our books on 11th February 2011, so please note that any goods ordered from Broadband Sandwell after that date will be charged after 1st April, and will therefore be in next year's budget.
- The Sandwell Traded Services Fair, open to head teachers and deputies, is on 22 March and runs straight after the Head Teachers Joint Partnership meeting at The Bethel. Come along and talk to us.

Espresso at Home

Teachers in schools that subscribe to Espresso are currently able to access the Espresso content from home. Broadband Sandwell has negotiated more preferential pricing for Sandwell schools subscribing to Espresso. At the CLC event Sam White, from Espresso, will announce details of espresso@home for pupils for Sandwell schools.

Espresso subscribers

We have been able to maintain preferential pricing for Espresso in Sandwell schools, even for new subscribers. Please contact us if you are interested. Also, remember that your school is eligible for training updates on the use of Espresso in the curriculum, this is part of the subscription charge. Contact Espresso to arrange your school's entitlement to this training.

Tablet PCs?

There are a number of tablet PCs vying for popularity and the Apple Ipad seems to have everyone's attention at present, but this has certain limitations. We have been looking at this and some alternatives:

The Ipad costs around £400. The Ipad2 has been rumoured to be following quickly. We are looking out for information of the extra features that Ipad2 will offer.

Learnpad is the same size as an Ipad but costs only £295. It runs the Android operating system which allows access to flash animated websites such as Espresso, Education City, Purple Mash and the content on Cbeebies and the CBBC.

A windows tablet from RM, called the [Slate](#), costs £399 and runs a version of [Windows 7](#) which cannot be networked and at first viewing loses out on screen readability. Windows 8 is being created with tablets in mind.

Schools should consider the curriculum they wish to deliver before buying devices which are not necessarily aimed at education. The connectivity of these devices raises issues for schools as does screen size and logistics with regard to synchronising and recharging. There is no danger in rushing to come second.

Big Trak

You will have noticed over the Christmas period that Big Trak was resurrected (or maybe you are too young to remember it from the last time). As useful early programming activities and for developing logical thinking, these 1970s toys are now available for less than £30 and offer value for money.

BETT

Colleagues who visited the Bett show this year generally commented that it seemed to be more about technology than about education. Did you go, if so, what did you see there? Let us know, and we will publish your worthy suggestions.

E Safety

Please note that e-safety training is available from Broadband Sandwell, we have CEOP Ambassador trained staff and can tailor any training to your school's needs. Also, "Roar" online e-safety resources are available across the broadband network.

Broadband Filtering

Schools were advised last year that we have set up individual school filtering policies on the Broadband service, so that your school's filter list can be changed without affecting other schools. Call Broadband Sandwell if your school needs a website that is currently blocked to be allowed at your school.

Life after WMNet

Loss of grant caused Sandwell to withdraw from WMNet last year. WMNet was the West Midland focus group for educational ICT services for the LAs of the West Midlands, and acted as our Regional Broadband Consortium. Despite losing staff two years ago, the cost of membership remained high, and with the current austerity measures in place, we thought long and hard about continued membership, which only offered schools peripheral benefits. Some of the resources supplied by WMNet were not used, others were purchased in earlier years and so continue to be available. Others, such as the e-safety pledge, will be replaced by a Sandwell version. Some resources, such as iboard, are still available.

Competition and annual survey

Thanks to those schools that completed our annual satisfaction survey. Each returned questionnaire was entered into a prize draw, which was won by Priory Primary school. All other returnees were given a free webcam to thank them for their time.

The results of the survey were very favourable, with few adverse comments. We are, however, always interested in improving the service that we offer. If you encounter difficulty with any service that you receive, please let us know.

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We welcome your input. If you have something to share with colleagues and wish to contribute to future newsletters please contact Chris Howles, chrishowles@broadbandsandwell.org.uk