

SPOTLIGHTS

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Real success in the real world.
Day after day we witness how Apple technologies truly enrich the lives of students and staff, transforming the way they live, learn and work.

Spotlight is our way of capturing and sharing with you examples of great practice and innovation from the education sector.

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SFX Sixth Form College

**Increasing digital skills and
liberating learning beyond the
classroom with iPad**

How Saint Francis Xavier developed a digital strategy
which has totally transformed how teachers teach and
students learn with iPad.

Context

Saint Francis Xavier Sixth Form College (SFX) is a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and ambitious sixth form college of 1,280 students situated within the London borough of Wandsworth.

The College delivers high quality education to 16-19 year olds offering a wide range of A-Levels, BTECs and UAL courses.

It is a college for the whole community, welcoming students and staff of all backgrounds, faiths, no faith, and everything in between.

The challenge

Educational institutes are the starting point for the next generation of innovators.

To fulfil this responsibility, they themselves need to innovate and become centres not just for learning, but for creative thinking. Wherever the college's students plan to go next, whether that's higher education or employment, SFX needs to provide them with the foundational skills to be successful.

To enable them to provide this support for their students, SFX set out to become a centre for digital innovation. They defined achieving this goal as providing "teaching and learning facilitated through the effective and efficient use of digital technology". This meant overcoming two core challenges:

Establishing a college-wide digital strategy

Students at SFX come from a broad range of non-traditional and disadvantaged backgrounds, so it was vital that any new digital strategy established a level playing field for all students, regardless of their background.

Increasing digital skills and liberating learning beyond the classroom

The decision to introduce technology-based teaching and learning highlighted the need to modernise the curriculum, raising standards and performance through digital technology. For SFX, this meant:

- Outlining the purpose of transformation and backing this up with a clear implementation strategy.

- Developing a comprehensive teaching and learning strategy and engagement plan.

- Deploying robust and reliable IT systems and infrastructure.

- Designing a sustainable financial model to support the digital strategy.

The solution

Working with Academia, SFX developed a digital strategy with a phased programme of transformation. iPad was identified as the device at the centre of this new strategy, and as being key to unlocking mobile, accessible learning.

SFX's Digital Innovation Strategy: an outline

The first step was to provide teachers with Apple iPad devices and launch a pilot where six curriculum areas transformed to become "digital courses". A skills development and onboarding process was developed to train, upskill, and empower teachers to get the most from the new digital strategy. As part of this pilot, all students enrolled on these digital courses were able to use iPad devices on a 1:1 basis, for learning inside and outside of the classroom.

SFX's main priority was to ensure that no student was excluded from digital learning based on their background. To encourage device uptake, the college decided upon a contribution towards the cost of each iPad to assist with affordability. For those students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, SFX chose to provide a loaned iPad for the duration of their study.

Phase two deployment

After the success of the pilot, phase two of SFX's Digital Innovation Strategy was launched. On top of the original six digital courses, 25 additional curriculum areas converted.

Every successful digital strategy needs advocates to help get everyone on board. As part of their roll-out programme, SFX has introduced an incentivised training scheme where teachers can become certified as Digital Teachers, Digital Champions or Digital Experts. Incentives include vouchers and a day in lieu for those who attain Apple Teacher status.

“Academia have been extremely helpful in securing the best rates for the device and accessories, which include the latest iPad, cases with built-in keyboards, Apple Pencils and full accidental insurance.”

– Shah Sher Ali, Executive Director, SFX

Why iPad?

Deploying iPad has unlocked some exceptional benefits for SFX:

Truly enhanced blended pedagogical approach.

Device portability lends itself to working both within the college setting and beyond.

Complementary accessories to extend the iPad learning experience, including cases and keyboards.

Seamless integration with key collaboration tools including Google Suite tools.

Reduced paper processes thanks to marking and work submissions moving online.

Access to a host of specialist educational apps to enrich learning, such as apps looking at human anatomy.

Simple-to-use softphone app integrated with the college's telephony system, enabling communication between staff and learners' parents.

Widespread familiarity with Apple features and functionalities expedites roll-out.

Device accessibility features provide advanced learning support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Better management of safeguarding on mobile devices using JAMF MDM solution.



The impacts

On learners and their families

Improved quality of learning — Liberate learning from enclosed classrooms and introduce open learning without any boundaries of space and time.

Increased equality — Various support frameworks are in place to ensure that no single learner is ever disadvantaged or unable to participate in digital learning. Over the past three years, the college has invested heavily in building a stock of iPad devices, and currently has more than 500 devices available for students to borrow.

Opportunities for economic support — A £50 contribution towards a device is offered to all those wishing to purchase their own iPad outright.

Parent-teacher communication — Parents and guardians now have a much clearer line of communication with those educating their children.

Higher attendance — Since introducing the digital strategy, both learner attendance and punctuality have improved.

Perhaps the best way of measuring impact is by asking the students themselves for the feedback. SFX students that were part of the digital courses have been overwhelmingly positive about the impact of SFX's digital strategy on their learning.

100% of students use their iPad frequently/always outside of class to complete their studies.

100% strongly agreed/agreed that mobility and accessibility benefited the quality of their learning.

100% felt that without the iPad it would be disadvantageous to progress and would impact their ability to be innovative learners.

On staff and the college overall

Similarly to SFX students, the digital innovation strategy has been a great success with teaching staff. They have provided extremely encouraging feedback:

84% strongly agreed/agreed mobility and accessibility benefited the quality of their teaching.

82% strongly agreed/agreed the use of digital technology supported their planning and delivery of more engaging learning and helped student progress in and out of lessons.

100% strongly agreed/agreed having a digital innovation strategy that provides clear level of digital skills progression would help their development.

“The use of digital [tools] allows ... us to use different technologies to support classroom models. We found this particularly useful when embedding AR apps into our modelling such as illustrating the human body through the Anatomy app.”

— Member of teaching staff, SFX

Other impacts include

Increased mobility in class

— Teachers able to wirelessly project iPad content to smartboard from anywhere in the classroom making them fully mobile and enhancing engagement.

More empowerment — iPad empowers teachers to work with their students wherever and whenever they need to and to manage their learning in a way that works for everyone.

Wider variety of tools — With iPad, teachers can use devices and curriculum apps to engage and enthuse learners that exhibit different learning styles.

Increased creativity — Reduced boundaries to learning mean that teachers are freer to do what they joined the profession to do: to inspire and to educate. They can browse the vast range of educational apps on the AppStore to enhance their teaching and

provide a more engaging learning experience.

Flexible working — With access to resources outside of college, staff have more flexibility to handle curriculum and wider college workloads when it suits them.

Personal development — as the final statistic above indicates, teaching staff are enthused by the opportunity to develop their own digital skills. This will assist them not only in their teaching at SFX, but in any goals they may have for future career progression.

College growth — Student recruitment has increased significantly, which SFX attribute in no small part to having such an attractive, well-established digital strategy.

The unexpected benefits

The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge interruption to learning, and SFX didn't escape the effects.

They were, however, able to mitigate many of the impacts because of their digital innovation journey:

"By the time the Covid-19 pandemic forced education institutions to close, we were well into our second digital transformation pilot with 25 curriculum areas becoming digital courses. We had close to 45% of students with iPad devices."

To deliver a rich remote learning experience, teachers relied heavily on iPad for many of their day to day tasks. iPad enabled teachers to:

- Access and deliver remote learning sessions.

- Set and mark students' work.

- Track and monitor learners and their progress.

- Communicate with learners and their parents using softphone on the iPad.

- Remotely access all on-site digital resources directly from the iPad.

When reflecting on their remote learning experience, SFX staff noted that: "We are confident that the digital strategy, the use of iPad and the associated tools and educational apps, played a central role in ensuring high quality remote teaching and learning."



The outcome

The overall response to SFX's digital innovation strategy has been incredibly encouraging across the whole college community.

When surveyed in 2021, it was revealed that

94% of teachers strongly agreed/agreed student having access to an iPad increased independence and homework/assignment submission (whilst also supporting blended learning).

94% of teachers felt empowered in completing teaching and non-teaching tasks.

100% of students strongly agreed/agreed the use of mobile digital devices supported their engagement with their teachers.

100% of students strongly agreed/agreed the use of iPad had increased their ability to complete research task/ blended learning and supported them in meeting homework/assignment deadlines.



Looking to the future

SFX's overall goal is to become an outstanding education centre of excellence. They rightly see their digital innovation strategy as playing a major role in achieving this. They have established some key targets that they see as pivotal to achieving this:

SFX aim to:

equip every student with an iPad by the end of the 2022/2023 academic year;

increase the number of teaching staff that are certificated as being Digital Teachers, Digital Champions and Digital Experts;

establish Digital Student Ambassadors who can showcase best learning practices to their wider student body.

By deploying iPad, SFX have truly accelerated their journey to becoming a beacon college for digital innovation.

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Let's explore

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