



Knockaclarig P.S spread word of IT innovation across Europe

Summary

One year on from the schools success at the BT Inspired IT Awards, their IT project continues to reduce rural isolation using the latest palm held technology.

Knockaclarig P.S is blazing a trail in Europe presenting workshops on how to implement successful IT projects within education after scooping the 'Health and Education' Award at the BT Inspired IT Awards in 2006.

Knockaclarig primary school was the winner of the 2006 'Health and Education' BT Inspired IT award. The projects aim was to reduce rural isolation and improve learning by using the latest palm held technology. The development of innovative teaching methods and tools which demonstrated best practice mode captured the judge's attention and made them deserved winners.

This time last year Principal, Tomas Roche spent the majority of his time teaching students in a small primary school in Cork. However, today he can now be found anywhere in Europe giving workshops on how to implement successful IT projects within education. In between flights we caught up with him for a brief chat on how the project is going a year later.

"Winning the BT Inspired IT Award has triggered a spiral of events that has put Knockaclarig at the heart of technological innovation not only within Ireland but within the EU. The profile of the school has rocketed, locally, nationally and on a European level" said Tomas Roche, Principal, Knockaclarig Primary School.

This in turn has helped place them on the Governments recognised 50 digital primary schools in Ireland, which acts as a benchmark to the success of IT projects within Irish primary schools. Furthermore, they have also had the prestigious recognition of being placed in the European e-twinning book. This was published by the EU and is a book of good IT practice within education in Europe, an accolade bestowed on only 34 schools, out of nearly 30,000 in Europe.

"The award has given us the recognition we needed to instil confidence in our project and given us the belief that we can further push the boundaries of IT. This confidence has enabled us to go to Europe with our projects and we have set up several training courses for other schools encouraging them to do the same therefore opening the door for other schools to follow."

Roche continues; "Being recognised through the BT Inspired IT Awards has paved the way for further innovation and development within the school and helped drive further technology projects. We now have regular video conferencing and blogging with schools throughout Europe and have recently integrated mobile phones into the equation. These are things we never thought were possible a year ago but the BT Inspired IT Awards have instilled in us a thirst for success and a desire to further progress and succeed in technological development."

The attention winning the award has brought to the project has been instrumental in successfully securing the necessary funding to enhance the various projects Knockaclarig are currently undertaking. Tomas Roche continues; "Securing the money to get these projects up and running isn't easy, however, now that we have a proven record of success things seem to be moving a lot more quickly and we are now getting opportunities that we never thought possible."

"We must not forget the most important factor in this whole project and that's the impact that the technology is having. The children are responding exceptionally well and are reaping the benefits of these innovative learning methods. They love their hand held devices and are teaching their parents how to work them as well excelling in ways we never imagined. Overall, technological learning and development in the whole community is booming and we are proud to be giving them this opportunity."

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