

Corlaer College adopts Chromebooks as standard



Corlaer College
Meerwegen scholengroep

About Corlaer College

- High school
- 1,700 pupils
- Progressive and innovative

Results

- Easier cooperation
 - Greater flexibility to tailor material to pupils
 - Lower costs
 - No servers or other ICT facilities required
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Corlaer College is a high school in the Dutch town of Nijkerk, with a total of 1,700 pupils. It is strongly committed to new technology that enriches the educational process and makes lessons more interesting, and was one of the first schools in the country to use Chromebooks.

Chromebooks piloted in three classes

“We have a policy of consistent innovation,” says Rob de Groot, who has been the school’s IT manager since 1994. “We use theme teaching, where subjects and learning materials are grouped around specific topics, and we have many open-plan work zones alongside traditional classrooms. We began adopting an electronic learning environment in 2006, and we started assessing the potential of digital education early in 2012. Many schools were using tablets, but they don’t have keyboards and we thought that wasn’t ideal. We decided to hang fire for a while to see what the market did, but then we heard that a school book publisher was piloting Chromebooks.”

The school didn’t hesitate, and Rob was soon taking delivery of the first Chromebook for testing. “It was really easy to use. It only took a moment to start up, I didn’t have to install anything, and I could begin using it straight away,” he said. The Chromebook was enthusiastically received by the teachers, and the school ordered 85 for a trial involving three classes.

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Learning together

The Chromebook uses the Chrome OS operating system, which offers cloud storage and a high level of security. It comes with all the most popular Google products, such as Gmail and Docs, and specific educational apps. There is a simple version of AutoCAD for technical drawing pupils, an interactive view of the human muscular system for those studying biology, and a 3D display of the solar system for geography pupils. “Most teaching material is now available in digital form,” Rob says. “Some subjects are still being developed, and we’re using books for those, but the publisher is hard at work on them.”

Using Chromebooks has many other benefits. Pupils can work together on projects using Google Docs, receive extra guidance without holding up the rest of the class, and use Hangouts to get help from teachers or classmates with their homework.

Rob says the biggest advantage is being able to tailor teaching to individual pupils. “You can see exactly what stage they’re at with the material. If they’ve finished, you can give them more work, and if they’re behind, you can give



them extra support. Teachers can make their own videos for pupils to watch on YouTube, and the combination of Chromebooks and software really lets you adapt the lessons to the pupils.”

“They’re saving us money: a Chromebook costs €300, which is cheaper than a package of books. They’re very fast, and they make it easier for us to tailor our teaching to individual pupils. We no longer have to worry about licences, security and server space, and we don’t have to install software on different computers. And if we do have any problems, we get 24/7 support from Google.”

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Using Hangouts for lessons and homework

The pupils responded enthusiastically too. They were given their Chromebooks to try out just before the Christmas break, and one of the teachers created a document in Google Drive asking for their Christmas wish lists. He didn’t mention it to anyone, but within two days he’d received a response from every pupil.

The Chromebooks also make it easier for the youngsters to do their homework together outside of school hours, because they no longer have to be sitting in the same room. They can even use Hangouts to test one another when revising for exams.

“Once, one of the pupils had to go to hospital,” explains Rob. “She took her Chromebook with her, and in the morning her teacher saw that she was logged in. She was a bit worried about her operation, so the teacher let her follow the lesson using the Hangouts video function. When the doctors came to collect her, they used it to tell the whole class what was going to happen.”

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About Google Chromebooks

Chromebooks are fast, portable computers that give students access to the web's rich educational tools & resources. Educators can manage Chromebooks easily from their web-based Admin Console. And starting at just £199 per device including Google Apps for Education for free, these computers make technology affordable for schools. You can learn more here:

www.google.com/edu/products/devices/



Setting individual user rights

It was important to consult parents about Chromebooks, so staff held an information evening. Again, the response was predominantly positive. "We did get some questions about privacy, and how to ensure that kids didn't see things online that they weren't supposed to see," Rob says. This was easy to answer: all of the Chromebooks are managed from a control console, specifying who has what rights to switch functions on and off, install and uninstall apps, and block websites. Security is provided by Google, so malware scanners and back-ups are always up to date.

School continues to innovate

After six months, the school had made up its mind, and during the following year the Chromebooks were extended to first-grade classes. "They're saving us money," Rob says. "A Chromebook costs €300, which is cheaper than a package of books. They're very fast, and they make it easier for us to tailor our teaching to individual pupils. We no longer have to worry about licences, security and server space, and we don't have to install software on different computers. And if we do have any problems, we get 24/7 support from Google."

According to Rob, the Chromebooks have also made ICT management simple. "I can now focus more on quality, and on things like improving our Wi-Fi connection," he says. "Our glass fibre network handles between 200 and 250 gigabytes a day, and we'll need to expand our capacity, because all new pupils will use Chromebooks."

Other schools are also showing an interest, and Rob receives visits from colleagues elsewhere on a weekly basis. One of the teachers, Peter van Montfrans, also works at other schools, and has been asked by the national secondary education council to join a working group on innovation. All this is good news, as Rob explains: "It's amazing to think that two years ago, we had only one computer for every two pupils. We really do recommend Chromebooks to other schools."