

# Case Study

## Pooltown Junior School

Pooltown Junior School in the heart of a designated area of social needs and deprivation in Ellesmere Port is being seen as a model for others thanks to its enlightened eLearning policy.

Pupils have become enthusiastic and responsive to whiteboard-based teaching and teachers have embraced the new teaching methods wholeheartedly.

Interactive, often video-based content from leading online publisher Espresso is pre-loaded on the innovative CachePilot smart caching and content distribution device from Equinet.

Head teacher Amanda Whitley says there has been a marked improvement in behaviour since the system was introduced as part of the government-backed Ellesmere Port Education Action Zone project.



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## Pooltown Junior School

**A** Cheshire junior school in the heart of district designated as an area of social needs and deprivation has revitalised its teaching methods to such an extent that it hopes to apply for NAACE (National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education) mark status next year.

Pooltown Junior School in Ellesmere Port has achieved this remarkable turnaround in its performance thanks largely to the installation of electronic whiteboards and the adoption of Equinet's CachePilot system to store and update video-rich eLearning content.

"This system is fantastic," says teacher David Wearing. "If any of the children find it difficult to understand something, we can immediately source a video clip or an interactive exercise that will explain it much more effectively. We even have a voting system with multiple-choice questions, which the pupils answer via pads on their desks.

"By using these teaching methods rather than the old blackboard and chalk, you find it really engages the youngsters. Children who were reluctant to contribute beforehand are much quicker to raise their hands. It's very powerful."

Head teacher Amanda Whitley agrees. "Our staff are absolutely thrilled with the whiteboards and wouldn't want to be without them now. Our school is in a challenging area and some of our students are capable of challenging behaviour but since the whiteboards were put in our teachers have noticed a marked improvement in behaviour. Because of the interaction and the variety of things the teachers can do, it has improved things no end."

Pooltown's experience has been so positive that the school is seen as a countywide pilot for such teaching methods. Parents, governors and PTA members from other schools in Cheshire have visited on numerous occasions to see the system for themselves.

### Education Action Zone

Pooltown is one of 19 schools – 3 secondaries and 16 primaries – within LEAP EAZ (Education Action Zone), Ellesmere Port's EAZ. The government established EAZs back in 2000 to improve educational standards in areas designated as epicentres of social problems. Of these 19 establishments, 14 have now been equipped with CachePilots, electronic whiteboards and the complete Key Stage 1 & 2 curriculum-based content suite from industry leader Espresso Education.

Steven Byles, the EAZ's IT coordinator, says that when the whiteboards were installed it was felt that pre-loading of content was the best way to optimise access times. The next stage is to teach the teachers how to pre-cache Internet content within the CachePilot, enabling them to use online material as part of their planned lessons.

"We know how valuable this will be for the teachers," he says. "For example, there's a Roman website that takes up to an hour to download from the Net if a whole class is trying to access all at once. If the web-based lessons are cached in advance, these access times are reduced dramatically."

With CachePilot, only new content is sourced from the Internet via the available data link – the bulk of the site is stored within the device. As for pre-loaded content, Equinet has developed a unique auto updating system that enables content providers to send out updates quickly and, above all, securely. According to Steven, "CachePilot is much faster than other caches we've looked at. We're really happy with its performance at all the schools in our region."

Although the pupils at Pooltown School don't yet have individual PCs, they are able to use a computer suite with 12 PCs, all of which are Internet enabled. Pooltown is currently connected via ISDN, although high-speed ADSL is due to be rolled out in the near future.

### Espresso and CachePilot

Espresso Education was the first of Equinet's Content Alliance Partners to supply CachePilots pre-loaded with their own content to customers. In this way, CachePilot acts as a straightforward plug-and-play content delivery device that can store up to 120 G/bits of data, which is vital at a time when most eLearning packages routinely exceed 10 G/bits. With more and more online publishers moving towards online delivery of their content rather than enduring the high cost of distributing multiple CDs, the Espresso/CachePilot model is becoming the accepted norm.

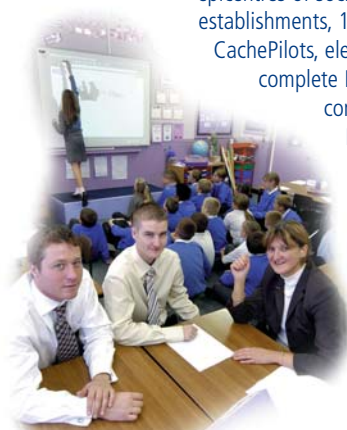
The teachers at Pooltown have been extremely impressed with Espresso's product and customer service. "Espresso are very responsive," says David Wearing. "If you tell them you need something new to help illustrate a point, it's invariably added within a few weeks and will arrive with the next update."

Designed precisely to meet the needs of schools, as defined by the Department for Education & Skills and BECTA, CachePilot is an all-in-one smart content delivery solution that is robust enough to handle any eLearning package, no matter the size, content provider or available bandwidth. It can store, update and deliver both static and dynamic content locally, enabling simultaneous access by multiple PCs.

"eLearning packages put an enormous strain on data networks and it is vital that delivery methods keep pace," says Mike Taylor, Equinet's Director of eLearning. "Traditional caching solutions just aren't up to the job."

CachePilot uses a variety of clever techniques to ensure all steps are taken to avoid wasting valuable bandwidth, slowing down networks or compromising network security. It also boasts a structured data store for easy retrieval of information, comprehensive management statistics and logs, and web serving functionality. It can also act as a secure router to the Internet and as a content filter.

[www.cachepilot.com](http://www.cachepilot.com)



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