

Case Study

Welford & Wickham Primary School

Deep in the heart of rural Berkshire may be an unlikely setting, but headmistress Sonia Crisp, her husband Steve and 39 under 11's have put Welford and Wickham Primary School on the map for its innovative use of the Internet.

Mrs Crisp was the Southern Region winner of the Teaching Award for Most Creative Use of ICT in a Primary School – a competition sponsored by the BBC, The Guardian and Lloyds TSB Group.



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NetPilot
Internet Security

Five years ago the pupils got their first taste of email, initially mailing Eskimo children at a school in Point Hope, Alaska.

The contrast in cultures was striking, with both sides getting very different answers than ever could have been guessed at from a text book. When the UK children emailed "Is it dangerous to go out at night?" for example, they received the reply "Oh no – we take guns." The Eskimo children weren't worried at all about 'stranger danger' but had to take precautions against wolves and polar bears.

Although Welford and Wickham's schoolchildren had been using the world wide web for researching their termly topics for some time, about a year ago Mrs Crisp wanted to take things a step further and network the school's seven computers. Around the same time the government had started to encourage schools to use ISDN, and Mrs Crisp's husband Steve – who runs Primary Networks Limited (www.primary-networks.com), a company that specialises in getting primary schools up and running with IT and helping them to use the Internet efficiently – had just discovered NetPilot. The various elements fitted together well and the NetPilot Internet Security Appliance was installed to give Internet access via all the school's PCs.

"NetPilot actually does quite a number of separate functions that would have cost us a lot if we had to do them by using different software," he explains. "It's very economical and very easy to administer."

Mr Crisp sees NetPilot as such a boon to the educational sector that he is liaising with several Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) and working closely with NetPilot's development team to fine-tune the product for school use. He cites NetPilot's filtering and audit trails as particularly useful adjuncts to

ISP filtering, although the school still feels that individual supervision is also important.

"Children are always supervised when using the Internet – in the same way that we only allow them to watch the television in supervised classroom activities for educational purposes,"

says Mrs Crisp. "They have

different places they can go for research. They have the library. They have teachers and parents. And now they have the Internet as well."

Until the last six months or so, Mrs Crisp admits it was hard to find worthwhile research material on the Internet that was not already available in books or on CD-ROM, but that it has improved dramatically recently. "The Internet is up-to-date, dynamic and makes the process of doing research very enjoyable. The children can find information then easily cut, copy and paste it straight into a document – or add it to their web page."

Both the Crisps are adamant that even without the Internet, the pupils of Welford and Wickham would "still be the same, wonderful children" but it is clear that the technology has had a dramatic effect on the school. As a direct result of being connected, teachers have visited from as far afield as Alaska and Mauritius and the children have annual exchange visits from a school in Norway. ■

www.netpilot.com

