

Primary ICT

At the Best Practice Forum meetings in spring 2004, colleagues shared ideas about software and websites that they found useful. Here's a brief summary of what we looked at. Publishers, prices and websites for more info are at the bottom.

Software:

Concept Cartoons on CD: The cartoons are the same as in the book, except initially only one speech bubble is filled in, leaving you the option of using your own children's ideas (particularly useful with an interactive whiteboard when you can save them) or the authors' ones revealed when you click on the cartoon child. Background info (for teacher) is a click away.

Simple Data Handling: An excellent graphing package - a well designed and very simple to use piece of software for generating bar charts, pie charts, line graphs and histograms. £35 for one, £100 for a site licence (which includes teachers loading it onto their own laptops to prepare work off site). More details at <http://www.djb.co.uk>

Virtual Experiments: Produced by Collins. QCA linked modules for Y5/6. Each one contains an intro, an activity, and an extension activity and glossary. Very useful for revision or for simulating experiments that take time to do e.g. germinating plants. A few caveats. Y3/4 disc was released in March 2004.

Channel4 TV ROMs: Video clips (usually 1-2 mins. long) from Channel 4's catalogue of TV programmes, each focussing on one particular aspect. Also stills from the videos, a glossary, "check it out" games & quizzes, matched worksheets and background info. Six themes: Animals, Earth & Beyond, Electricity, Forces, Habitats, and Materials.

Heinemann Explore CD ROMs: what's available from the subscription website (see website details below). There's one disc each for Sc2, 3 & 4. (Prices are for *each* disc.) There are three levels of information: Quick Facts, Exploring and Digging Deeper. Large bank of photos which can be exported. Biographies of historical and modern day scientists. Guide to scientific enquiry - wordy but not too detailed. Each disc also contains one week's planned literacy lesson for each KS2 year group on a scientific theme.

All about Materials (KS1): activities involving sorting & matching, testing properties of materials (although several - all? - could be done better "live"); use of Venn diagrams. The text on screen can be spoken (by an English sounding voice) which will help non/poor readers.

Useful websites looked at (URLs listed below):

Science clips - BBC: a section for each year group from ages 5-6 to 10-11. Each section has the same headings as the QCA SoW. Best activities are ones that couldn't be done easily in the classroom or would take too long, or as review material. And it's all free!

Espresso: very large subscription site covering all subjects. Features video clips, thousands of potentially useful photos, multimedia activities, worksheets, weblinks (regularly checked and updated), and a weekly updated news service, with linked videos and newspaper pages. There is an easier-to-read version for KS1/weaker readers. Looks like a very powerful option if (a) you can find time to access it all, and (b) can afford it.

Active Science, from GlaxoSmithkline: smaller range of materials than the BBC site, ranging from habitats for age 5+, population growth for 8+, through to KS4 materials. Some useful simulations.

Scienceweb: a National Grid for Learning site for KS1 & 2, with a range of commercial sponsors. Topics are well supported with Teachers' notes and worksheets to go with the activities. A small site so far but due to grow, and well thought out activities.
QCA linked, but not all modules

Kent ngfl: useful advice on using Intel microscopes (who's seen something amazing on theirs?), datalogging projects, using a database to investigate friction, and a Powerpoint on Habitats and food chains.

Infant Explorer: part of the Kent ngfl. Big books compiled on screen using children's illustrations for the text. Access it from the naturegrid web address listed in the table.

Useful software looked at:

Software	Publisher	cost (£)		eLCS	website for more details
		1 PC	site license ¹		
Concept Cartoons (on CD)	Millgate House Ltd	40.00	80.00	✓	http://www.conceptcartoons.com
Simple Data Handling	djb microtech	35.00	100.00	×	http://www.djb.co.uk
Virtual Experiments Years 5-6	Collins	117.49	176.25 (N.B. must buy single copy too)	✓	http://www.collinseducation.com/subject.aspx?group=1&subjectid=25
Virtual Experiments Years 3-4	Collins	88.13	141.00 (N.B. must buy single copy too)	✓	http://www.collinseducation.com/subject.aspx?group=1&subjectid=25
TV ROMs: e.g. Forces, Materials	Channel 4	29.38	11.75 (for 10 further users)	✓	http://www.channel4.com/learning
Heinemann Explore theme CDs e.g. Life & Living Processes	Heinemann	180.00	300.00	✓	http://www.heinemannexplore.com
All about materials (KS1)	SEMERC/Granada	49.00	10.00 for each extra user	✓	http://www.granada-learning.com

Other software worth a look:

Software	Publisher	cost (£)		website for more details
		for 1 PC	site license	
Science Year - Primary Science	ASE	10.00	can be used on any computers in the school	http://www.ase.org.uk
Testbase, KS2 SATs questions	Doublestruck			<i>available on discount from LEA</i>

Useful websites looked at:

website	url	subscription?	free trial?
BBC Science Clips	http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools//scienc eclips	free	
Espresso	http://www.espresso.co.uk	£6.00 per pupil per year	CD sampler - see website
Heinemann Explore (5 subjects available)	http://www.heinemannexplore.com	For schools with 250+ children: £200 for 1 subject per year. For schools with less than 250 children: £150 for 1 subject per year. Discounts if you take subscribe to more than one subject or subscribe for 2 years. Can pay with eLCs.	30 day - see website
Scienceweb	http://www.scienceweb.org.uk	free	
Primary online	http://www.actis.co.uk	£3.00 per pupil per year. Can pay with eLCs	15 day - see website
Actibe Sceince (GlaxoSmithKlein)	http://www.activescience-gsk.com	free	
Kent National Grid for Learning	http://www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/primary.htm#Science or http://www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/primary.html to access other subject areas	free	
Naturegrid	http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/infant/bigbook.html and then click on Pond web	free	

Thanks to those who offered software, websites and useful experience. We didn't cover exactly the same material at both meetings but this is a collation of both. Please let me know of any errors,

I think it would be helpful to compile a directory of software and websites that people use - with comments about how good/bad they are, which year groups you've used them with, maybe even lesson plans showing how they've been used. Would anyone like to coordinate this?

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