

TECHNICALITY

SPEAKING!

HeadLines

GETTING a gentle grilling today is Dr David Dennison, headmaster at St Margaret's CE high school, Algburth.

Name: Dr David Dennison
Title: Headmaster
Time in post: 14 years here - it's my 20th year in headship.
Your leadership style in three words: Firm but fair.

Three key aims this academic year: Maintain or improve both the high attainment and academic standards of last year. Do all we can to support our language college status. Design a new school building which will help us achieve a 21st Century curriculum.

Worst thing you did as a pupil: When collecting the science prize for the school, I dropped it and it rolled across the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall platform and into the audience.

Best thing: Winning the school chemistry prize.

Songs on your iPod: Leona Lewis's album in spirit.

Hobbies: Cycling, walking my Labrador Jack, reading, DIY.

Hero and why: I have two, Martin Luther King due to the impact he had on African American culture and Thomas Edison whose many patents impact on our day to day.



Education Reporter

Ben Turner went to St Margaret's CE high school which is making the most of technology and languages.

If leaders at St Margaret's CE high school have their way their pupils will soon be conquering the European jobs market.

The Algburth Road school's plain speaking headmaster, Dr David Dennison, is crystal clear why it is crucial his students are both technically savvy and able linguists by the time their schooling ends.

"The hope is that all our students will be the future captains of industry and be running the city."

"If we are to be true European capital we have to be able to compete in that market place," he said.

The boys' school has been a specialist technology college for 12 years - and has been at the forefront of using technology in the curriculum ever since.

This included acting as a pilot for the local authority in developing a virtual learning environment - allowing students online and interactive computer access to virtually all aspects of school life.

In April last year, it was given government approval to add a language specialism to its menu and develop it expertise for the benefit of pupils and the community at large.

In 2004 languages at schools were no longer compulsory.

But from 11 to 16, students take French and German as a matter of course and by the age of 14 pupils either do two GCSEs in French and German or other accredited courses.



MODERN TWIST: Alex Martin and Joe Griffiths use animation to learn languages

Pupils can also do German and Spanish at lunchtime clubs and the school is looking to add Spanish as a GCSE in the future.

French and German is continued at its unisex sixth form with Spanish also available as an extra course.

And technology is playing a massive part to overcome preconceptions boys often have that languages are difficult and should be

avoided at all costs. Alan Haxhurst said: "Our aim was to marry together the two specialisms. We wanted to use technology in languages to help us motivate, enthuse, inspire our students so they would find modern foreign languages more attractive, more accessible at all levels. The funding provided not only allowed us to purchase the necessary technological equipment - computers, interactive whiteboards, software, digital cameras, voting pads.

But just as if not more importantly saving time and expertise to create and use resources whether its PowerPoint, blogs, podcasts, emails and Word documents in foreign languages."

A good example of the two



FRENCH CONNECTION: Gaelle Leroux, the school's community language coordinator oversees her students

working hand comes in the shape of Brenda Barne, head of modern languages said.

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Pictures: Colin Lane

tastes online. And despite spending just three weeks on the brief, they wowed the judges with their promotional material which included a radio advert and posters.

"They electronically asked the German pupils questions on things like what websites they look at to what radio stations they listened to," Janet Kirby, the school's AIM Higher coordinator explained.

Students sent on two week British Council research fellowships to Germany as part of A-levels are expected to give oral and PowerPoint presentations on their return.

And I interrupt a French lesson where students are using a clever animation package which allows them to devise their own story boards. One features Dr Who apply used as a tool to explore future tense.

Students add voice overs and drawing and fill in speech bubbles in French national, Gaelle Leroux, the school's community language coordinator said: "Technology is motivational and pupils using the internet or podcast gives them an audience and a real sense of what they are doing."

And pupils clearly love the modern way of doing things. They include Ben Rotherham, 15, from Garston who succinctly says: "It brings what we are doing to life."

T'es bien!

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Kayte inside the School Gate



Co-ordinator of ECHO-backed anti-bullying charity Bullybusters Kayte Eaton gives her weekly insight into the war against bullies

I WAS fortunate to get an insight into the launch of an exciting new learning resource that will be invaluable to teachers across Merseyside thanks to an invitation from educational charity Ariel Trust.

The Ariel's Digital Citizens project allows young people to learn radio production skills and use them to make programmes about the issues facing them and their communities. As part of the course students are making a series of anti-bullying messages. They will be broadcast on radio stations across Merseyside and stimulate debate in an hour-long discussion programme on CityTalk 105.9.

The students research has involved watching the excellent film Denial which tells the story of a teenage boy who is bullied because he is perceived to be gay. It goes on to look at how peer pressure and family values can have a devastating effect on the lives of young people.

The educational resource that accompanies the film is the latest in a series of packs that Ariel has been commissioned to produce as part of the It's Not OK! programme.

Mapped against the English curriculum, it will provide teachers with a framework for studying the film and comes with a CD Rom packed with interactive games designed to be played in the classroom.

One of the English teachers who has been consulted in the development of the pack, Steve Talbot, from Rainhill High School is a big fan. "You could use this learning resource to replace year 9 SATs or for GCSE coursework. In either case, I'm confident of one thing, your pupils will love it - they might even start to think you and your lessons are vaguely cool!"

A similar pack was produced by Ariel, about fire-related anti-social behaviour. Schools wanting to use the resource they should contact Ariel on 707 8211 or email admin@arieltrust.com

BULLYBUSTERS is a unique partnership involving Liverpool, Wirral, Sefton and Knowsley councils, the Liverpool ECHO and the Merseyside Trades Union Council.

Part of the service is a helpline run by counsellors from Liverpool-based Local Solutions.

It also includes an interactive website, specially tailored anti-bullying workshops and peer mentoring schemes.

VoxPupils

STUDENTS at St Margaret's CE high school in Algburth give their thoughts on using technology to help learn new languages.



Owen Tacyn, 11, from Croxeth loves technology in language lessons. He said: "I love using animation in French and I think using technology makes us remember things better."



Daniel Robinson, 12, from Childwall said: "I like using computers to look at and research different languages."



Thomas Fisher, 11, from Huyton said: "If you go on holiday you can understand people and communicate better. Technology makes it more fun to learn."



Amir Poormand, 12, from Algburth said: "I find it very exciting when you are using modern day stuff."



LISTEN UP: Brenda Barne, Head of Modern Languages and Gaelle Leroux ensure pupils get the most out of languages and technology



SPEAKING MY LANGUAGE: Ben Rotherham, Jack Doherty and Daniel Bruce Christopher design their animations with the help of teacher Gaelle Leroux