



# HEREFORD ACADEMY

A secondary and sixth form school drives up teaching standards with 360-degree video for lesson observation



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THE HEREFORD ACADEMY

## OVERVIEW

The Hereford Academy is a secondary school and sixth form located in Hereford, Herefordshire, England.

Until recently, Hereford Academy in Herefordshire, was in special measures. With a new principal's fresh approach, combined with 18 months of hard work by the staff, the school is now out of special measures.

However, still considered to have 'serious weaknesses' assistant principal, Ed Snelgrove, recognised that to raise standards in learning they had to start with the teaching. The staff certainly couldn't work harder; they just needed to work smarter! To achieve this, the Academy wanted to encourage its teachers to be more reflective.

### 📍 HEREFORD ACADEMY, UK

#### ! OBJECTIVE

Improve OFSTED ranking

#### 💡 SOLUTION

Use of 360-degree video solution

#### ✅ OUTCOME

Teachers expressed their positive experience of concurrently using 360-degree video and the Lessonvu solution.



The introduction of a performance management scorecard system was the first step; the teachers were required to evaluate and rate themselves four times during the year. Their rating was backed up by data on student progress and behaviours. While this was a step in the right direction, there was still a level of inconsistency in terms of how each teacher evaluated themselves. The missing link was the ability for teachers to actually see and review their own lessons. The time was right for the school to introduce the use of videoed lessons into the review process.

Ed reviewed several classroom video systems but felt the ONVU Learning's LessonVU technology offered so much more than the others.

**“The obvious benefits were that it provides a 360 degree view of the learning environment so that nothing is missed,” he explains. The other unique feature of the classroom technology system is that it runs 24/7.**

Ed continues, **“We used to use mobile cameras to film lessons, but they were just too dominant in the classroom. If a teacher has to switch a camera on and off it becomes too prevailing; the children and teacher react differently**

**when they know they are being filmed.**

**The LessonVU system has a very thin form factor and runs constantly, so it becomes almost invisible to both the students and teaching staff.”**

Aside from the benefits of the LessonVU hardware and software, another key benefit of working with ONVU Learning came a little later on. The Academy wisely started with implementing the technology into just one class, and picked a progressive, enthusiastic French teacher to trial it first.

Ed's recommendation to other schools is to, “start working with one or two progressive teachers who are excited by the potential of the technology. This teacher will, in turn, help you establish a structure for the reflection process and educate other teachers into its value.”

It was when the teacher reflected on her first lesson that the additional and significant benefit of working with ONVU Learning was realised. Having watched a particular part of a lesson the teacher initially surmised that it went very well. And it certainly looked that way.

However, ONVU Learning's performance review' consultant Dr. Sean Warren pointed out the expression on a couple



of students' faces; it wasn't until they zoomed in on this that it was clear that these two students had not grasped the learning objective.

In another lesson, the activity plan was good. The learning objective was introduced and the children started to work.

Throughout the lesson the teacher wandered around the class in and out of the tables offering advice and guidance to each child. While most teachers would have reviewed this as good teaching practice, Dr Warren raised a point for consideration. He explained, "The children had the learning content, they were working well and independently and they had the autonomy to work out the best way of approaching the challenge. But by having the teacher closely observing them, this independence and autonomy was taken away." By watching herself in this way, the teacher realised the importance of sometimes stepping back to stop interrupting the learning. Only with the video recordings are the teachers really



able to 'get under the skin' of what is happening in their class.

"The first lesson learned was that the teaching staff needed to learn how to effectively review their teaching and more importantly, understand what they were looking at," explains Ed. By working with Dr. Warren the teachers quickly learned how to effectively review their own teaching.

Ed continues, "It was probably this experience alone that made us realise that video recordings were the only way to enable teachers to fully reflect on their teaching.

IT'S HAD A MASSIVE IMPACT ON PROGRESS ALREADY, I USED LESSONVU WITH A YEAR 9 CLASS BUT NOT WITH YEAR 10 AND THEY WERE BOTH ASKED THE SAME QUESTIONS. I JUST MARKED THEIR ESSAYS TODAY AND ALREADY THE YEAR 9 CLASS IS ACHIEVING 30% HIGHER GRADES.

**BECKY MOUNTJOY**  
SECOND IN ENGLISH



In a class of 30 children even the most vigilant teacher won't see that child in the corner, or notice how often they repeat a particular word. LessonVU makes the invisible, visible. The ability to set up multiple views simultaneously, to gain a complete picture, has proved to be very important."

This level of experience and advice offered by Dr. Warren also helped the Academy with an appreciation of the issues related to their duty of care, safe-guarding and compliance.

The school already had permission from most parents to photograph their children but video was a separate issue. While most understood the purpose and value of the system, they weren't able to get everyone's acceptance. They also had one child under a witness protection scheme, which added another level of complexity. Refusing to remove any children from the class, with Dr. Warren's guidance, the school sought an alternative solution.

"Currently we have committed to keeping all the recorded data within the school and never letting it beyond the school walls", says Ed. He continues, "Safe-guarding and compliance are considerations that all schools must make; I would recommend seeking guidance from experts like Dr. Warren."

After a few weeks of working with the technology in one class and perfecting the reflection process, Hereford Academy implemented LessonVU into three other classes. These were also experienced, progressive and creative teachers, happy to have their lessons recorded.

The positive feedback and lessons learned from the four 'trial' teachers started to 'educate' and reassure the other staff of the benefits of the technology. Trust in the system began to grow and a 'ripple effect' started to the extent that the school has now invested in six more LessonVU systems. Over the last 12 months, every member of staff has been observed 10 times and value the potential and benefits.

"Today our staff actually feel liberated. The system has removed the need for them to have lesson observations and they now have the confidence to use the technology effectively. Combined with our score card system the results of the LessonVU technology are just what we hoped," concludes Ed.

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**ED SNELGROVE**  
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL





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