



**Philippa Anderson** explains how interactive

whiteboards can help with the transition from primary to secondary school, using English and drama as an example

**I**T IS well recognised how daunting the move from year 6 to year 7 can be – a new environment with a new collection of peers from a selection of feeder schools and new teachers with different teaching approaches. Transition projects aim to reduce the negative effects of this potentially demoralising part of a student's school life.

Drama is part of young people's core entitlement in the national curriculum orders and in England's Framework for Teaching English: Years 7 Upwards. For children in the key stage 2 to 3 transition (10 to 12-year-olds), this is a particularly significant change in their classroom experiences. The four central concepts of the key stage 3 English-drama strategy include expectations, engagement, progression and transformation. These concepts have a particular resonance within the context of drama and all can be overwhelming for year 6 students. One way of allaying these fears of life at secondary school is by a secondary school teacher visiting the primary schools to introduce the year 6 students to the learning resources and technologies that they will be using.

In drama, storyboarding applications such as Kar2ouche Macbeth provide an excellent route for the children to understand the story and begin to look at expectations, engagement, progression and transformation. Shakespeare may sound daunting to primary pupils, but it need not be if it is simplified. The lesson would begin by introducing the story of Macbeth, giving an overview of the characters and explaining why this is deemed one of Shakespeare's



# Dramatic licence

great tragedies. The use of a touch sensitive interactive whiteboard, such as a Smart Board, is invaluable to introduce the learning activity. Using this combination of software and hardware that the pupils will experience at secondary school ensures that the changeover is as smooth as possible.

Taking just one scene, such as the murder of Duncan, images of the key characters could be displayed on the interactive whiteboard while their role in the tragedy is explained and discussed. Using something like Kar2ouche, the students can generate storyboards which encourage the pupils to show their understanding of the play while demonstrating their ability to extract

key information. Students can be invited out to the front of the class to explain what they feel the characters would be saying, how they would be reacting in the scene and what emotions they would be experiencing. With the whiteboard, they can drag and drop speech bubbles into place and add in their own words. The interactive whiteboard provides the teacher with the opportunity of presenting the lesson idea to the students while enabling them to be very much involved in the learning activity.

While one small group remains at the interactive whiteboard, the others move to small groups around PCs to express their understanding of what the characters in

the drama are saying and how they could be saying it through dramatic conventions and techniques. Using the speech or thought bubbles, pre-recorded sound clips or their own recordings of comments, the students' responses can be emotional or intellectual, individual or shared, spoken or written. The interactive whiteboard users can actually engage with the software more effectively as they have the benefit of being able to use the character recognition functionality or the on-screen keyboard to add their text to speech or thought bubbles.

Responding to drama encourages pupils to reflect on their own experience. Like Duncan, students could be encouraged to then think of an example where someone tried to usurp them from a position that they valued. This could possibly be a position in a team, or a place in a competition, or a friendship. The pupils look at their lives, identities, values and cultures in a place where their real status and identity are not at stake. Drama enables them to symbolise the world in ways that engage the intellect and the emotions. Through drama, pupils can develop their emotional literacy and analytical awareness by seeing the world imaginatively from other perspectives.

Taking the learning to another level could involve filming the children. Using a video camera or digital stills camera the students can take images of their whole body expression which symbolises how they felt at the time of conflict and create a visual interpretation of their emotion. Creating drama includes discussion, research, questioning, thinking, sharing ideas and experimenting with different techniques to deepen the understanding of texts and situations. At the end of the lesson the students could display their images onto the whiteboard and discuss the image and what the expression says to the others in the class. Using the graphic images provided with Smart's Notebook software, or equivalent, speech or thought bubbles could be dragged into position while the students discuss the words or thoughts that would support the emotion.

Self-assessment should be part of every pupil's work in drama. Open shared assessment from the groups and whole class should be encouraged with suggestions of other ways of expressing the emotions or additional considerations. Using a whiteboard in this way provides a very graphic and engaging learning activity. Knowing that children are all openly showing their emotions and sharing ideas is an incredibly advanced skill in drama, however using these collaborative technologies seems to add a significant level of motivation and support to the year 6 students.

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