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The micro:bit at Downside School
Case Study

In March of 2018, we at ScienceScope moved our base of operations to Downside School, an independent school 10 miles south west of Bath. As we specialise in developing digital technologies and resources for education, it has offered significant opportunities for us, pupils and teachers to work together on a range of new and exciting projects.

In the UK there is a push to improve the use of digital technology within schools. Particularly in the independent sector. In September 2018 and in conjunction with Downside School's senior leadership team we saw a need to improve the way that digital technology is used. As a group we decided to offer a micro:bit to every student in 1st, 2nd and 3rd form as well as those studying Computing at GCSE. Our target was to implement the use of the micro:bit in multiple subject areas across the curriculum. These subject areas include Science, Design and Foreign Languages as well as Computing.

We wanted to develop not only the digital skills of the pupils but also those of the teachers, many of whom do not have much experience with digital technologies within their classrooms. The aim was to encourage the different subject areas to work together to create projects and activities that cover curriculum requirements in both subjects.

As part of a project linking Computing and Foreign Languages the 1st and 2nd form pupils have been designing word games and quizzes to aid in their learning of French and Spanish vocabulary. Pupils have responded positively to this exciting and interactive way of learning and are enjoying taking ownership of how they absorb information. Andrew Hobbs, who is the Head Master at Downside School said, "it is great to see our pupils using their imagination to create these innovative solutions to aid their learning in traditional school subjects".

Pupils in the 3rd form and those studying Computing for GCSE have been using the micro:bit in their computing lessons as an interactive tool to aid in their learning and helping to meet curriculum goals. A recent activity these pupils undertook was to investigate how the micro:bits communicate with each other.

The Autumn/Winter term of 2019 brings a further opportunity for micro:bit projects and activities at Downside School. We plan to implement a Science and Technology based project where the pupils will programme the micro:bit as a datalogger to conduct Science investigations into reaction time, sound level and cooling/heating curves.