



# Investing in their future with a new TV Studio

In May 2010 Planet PC were commissioned to install a fixed TV Studio for NEM CLC. We recently caught up with Alex to see how they were progressing...

**Q. Alex, how did you first hear about Planet PC?**

A. Repeat custom. NEM CLC has previously been supplied video studio equipment by Planet PC and when looking for a TV Studio installation, it was therefore natural to include them as part of the tendering process. This was primarily because of our organisation's previous dealings with Planet PC, but more importantly from numerous recommendations we received when enquiring with other CLCs around the country about their experiences in procuring video equipment. Quotes were sought from a number of companies and Planet PC was awarded the project.

**Q. What is the main use for the new TV Studio?**

A. High school level media projects. We have mainly used the equipment to provide a professional scenario for media students to take advantage of. Because of the live sets built in to the NewTek TriCaster software, we find the TV studio is most conducive to the creation of news bulletins and breakfast shows which work very well with a student class schedule of about an hour per session.

**Q. Is the TV Studio used solely for Media Studies or across the whole curriculum?**

A. Most of the use the TV studio has had so far has centred on media studies, from news reports to music videos, however we are also using it for cross curricular projects. For instance, we recently had a visit from several pupils from a German school as part of the 'Youth In Action' programme organised by the European Union and hosted locally by the Manchester Youth Service. We used the studio to great effect with the visiting pupils who described their visit in the form of a short news bulletin in English. This encouraged their collaboration with each other and St Matthew's pupils to create and type scripts in English, and challenged their understanding of English on many levels. The project included collaboration to create a script, reading of the script from the teleprompter under pressure and the control of the teleprompter to keep pace with the news readers. This short task also helped fuel intercultural dialogue between the visiting students and the students of St Matthew's who were acting as ambassadors to the school.

We also took the opportunity to use the video equipment to film several short interviews of year 8 pupils from each of St Matthew's feeder primary schools. This was done to provide a familiar face to potential new year 7 students that were considering St Matthew's in order to alleviate any fears the students may have had about starting high school. Keying was used during the interviews to show a montage of pictures taken in and around the school relevant to the subject matter.



**Q. How intuitive and user friendly have staff and students found the new TV Studio?**

A. After a day's training from Planet PC, we were able to produce video projects, including the use of virtual studios and good quality keying. After a few sessions with students the results quickly became more polished and professional, at which point the staff became confident to be more experimental.

Staff are now comfortable using the equipment in various situations and have begun entrusting the function of some equipment to students. I'm hopeful that staff involvement will move into more of a training and supervisory role, thus handing over the opportunity for even more hands on experience to the students.

**Q. How has your TV Studio benefited the staff and students?**

A. The TV studio has opened up possibilities that would have otherwise been prohibitively time consuming or impossible. The instant keying ability of the equipment eliminates the need for some of the compositing previously needed at the post processing stage that could potentially render certain media projects too complex for some students and staff. This benefit is achieved without sacrificing the understanding of keying as the students are involved at every step, and can see the keying in progress as they are working in the studio. Simply having a dedicated studio is of great benefit to staff and pupils as setup time is significantly reduced. Having access to the use of video equipment almost as readily as a computer suite makes the technology much more accessible to everyone involved.

**Q. Have you found that you have been able to capture the imagination of more students with this technology compared to more traditional teaching methods?**

A. Definitely. When students see the studio and gallery for the first time the reaction is usually very positive. When they use the studio their attention to the task at hand is absolute and, once they realise how much the studio is capable of, the ideas come in thick and fast.

**Q. Has the equipment encouraged collaboration between the students?**

A. Yes. Assigning roles to be filled when beginning a project in the studio such as Director, Anchor, Floor Manager, Teleprompter Operator etc., gives the students a good structure to work from. When outlining these roles I've found it beneficial to stress the importance of communication between them. Having the intercom system between the gallery and the studio emphasises this and seems to help keep them on task.

**Q. Has purchasing the equipment been a positive step for NEM CLC and do you have plans to expand the use of video technology?**

A. Having this studio has meant that we can offer more to the schools that we support. We plan to expand the use of these facilities into other curricular subjects and introduce the technology to primary schools in the area.

**Q. And finally, could you please sum up your experience with Planet PC?**

A. Not only does Planet PC know what they are talking about, they know what works and how to apply the technology to education. I'm yet to find another company that can rival their experience in education.