

## Starting with Play

### Introducing music technology



**Lidgett Grove School in York is a primary special school with 72 children, ranging from those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) to autism.**

Space is at a premium, with 2 classes located at a mainstream school. In 2005 Lidgett Grove becomes part of a village community, extending both its capabilities and the scope of its activities, but also making the easy movement of any technology very important.

Under its head Roger Nicholls the school took its first step into using music technology with the installation of an interactive soft play area. After discussing the best way to 'add sound' to the area, a flexible system based around IMS's MIDIcreator unit was designed. A number of switches were installed, housed in the walls and floor, enabling pupils to activate a wide range of sounds. These are connected via a patchbay that allows the whole area to be easily dismantled and extra sensors to be connected into the system.

#### Themes help teachers and pupils

The important consideration here is that staff can concentrate on their work with the pupils rather than being dictated to by the technology. A pre-programmed smart card slots into the front of the

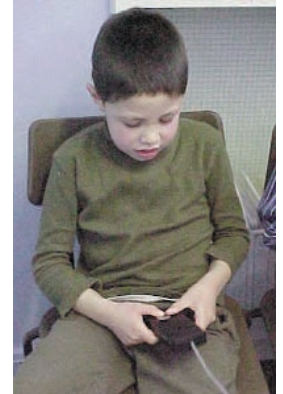


MIDIcreator to change the theme and begin the session. This themed approach, used by IMS for their Smart Card library, is based on the cross-curricula 'Themes' that are changed each term. Pre-recorded sounds are produced specially for schools and regularly updated as part of a support package. At Lidgett Grove this approach is used extensively, allowing teachers to relate play and fun activities to learning objectives.

Jane Craven, the school's music co-ordinator, has been responsible for implementing the use of this

equipment, working alongside teachers in the classroom. She has also been involved in the running of a local AMICUS project, which has linked Lidgett Grove with a nearby mainstream school.

Once teachers were comfortable using the fixed installation, Lidgett Grove decided to expand the benefits of the technology across the school by adding a mobile music technology kit. With MIDIcreator at the heart of the system, the kit includes a sampler, effects unit and amplifier plus a number of sensors. A mobile unit such as this, with equipment housed on a trolley, is better suited to children with more severe difficulties because sensors can be placed near individuals, on a chair or mounted close by. It's also a good first stage for many schools experimenting with the technology and wanting to move on from a basic classroom setup - maybe a MIDIcreator with speakers.



*Experimenting with technology*

Roger Nicholls believes that working with IMS has been of great benefit in helping the school tackle the introduction of technology:

**"We all get excited about just what we can achieve with the latest equipment, but we took the IMS line that we needed to start with a system that was easy to use so that the staff felt comfortable with it. It's important that everyone understands what to do and at the right pace for them."**

This approach certainly avoids apprehension and means that teaching staff are much better placed to get the most from the equipment as well as allowing their familiarity with it to fuel further ideas.

The school now has a wide range of switches to allow all the children to participate in interactive music sessions. This includes pupils with restrictive movements and those with excessive energy levels who can use the ball pool and soft play area. An ongoing development plan means that their children and staff can take advantage of the latest in music technology.

Immersive Media Spaces would like to thank Roger Nicholls and his staff at Lidgett Grove School, York, for their kind assistance in producing this material. (c) July 2003