Electronics at Cardinal Newman School

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Abstract

It was some two and a half years ago that electronics entered the curriculum at Newman. Since then we have learnt a great deal and I believe that the pupils have gained immeasurably in ways which we had not really expected.

The subject comes under the control of the Science Department and until electronics courses commenced at school the only relevant experiences possessed by staff were in the teaching of the electronics core content of the 'A' level Physics course and running clubs. Neither of these had much to do with teaching the subjects to the fourth and fifth year pupils. Additionally our knowledge of the subject had developed in a rather piecemeal fashion with perhaps the most constructive element coming from a project to build a burglar alarm for the school. This was at a time when video recorders were disappearing from Coventry schools at an alarming rate and very few schools had burglar alarms installed. The idea then developed among a group of the sixth formers that we would build our own alarm system, undercut the opposition and install it in the school. Beyond that the imagination ran amock. A company manufacturing the system, vast quantities of money being made etc. The governors were impressed with the prototype which having detected the presence of an intruder or smoke alerted the caretaker as to which block had been entered via a link through the lesson bell wiring.

Spirits were high especially when we learnt that one of the schools in the city had had a break in where the only item stolen was one of the commercial portable alarms issued to schools by the authority. The system was design built and installed, and worked reasonably well with some teething problems. The prime ones were high sided vehicles tearing the overhead wire down between the school and the caretakers house, and T.V. interference.
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