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St Nicholas' Catholic Primary School Press Release.

An audio technology system and architecturally designed learning spaces are enabling the delivery of a new philosophy of collaborative learning in Tamworth, NSW.

Hear and Learn's Flexcat system, designed to deliver clear, uninterrupted audio to every individual student within a learning space, is a feature of recently completed, open learning spaces at St Nicholas' Catholic Primary School.

With state and federal government financial backing, the project has delivered what St Nicholas' Principal, Stefan van Aanholt, believes is a "cutting edge and very futuristic" learning facility and focus.

According to Mr van Aanholt, education in the past focussed on the individual and was based on competition with industrial style rote learning,

"We want our kids working, thinking, creating and collaborating. Hear and Learn's technology is really aiding that revolutionary turn around. That's the way they learn the best. It's about reasoning, working things out together," said Mr van Aanholt.

From teacher instruction to collaboration with their peers, it's these "soft skills" that Mr Van Aarnholt believes students will need going into the future.

The interactive and collaborative possibilities the Hear and Learn Flexcat system offers students are wide ranging. During a History lesson discussing world explorers and the influence they've had on Australia today, students were able to put their opinions and ideas forward, interacting with their peers via some of the most recent audio technology available in a flexible and engaged learning environment.

Principal Stefan van Aanholt stresses the emphasis at St Nicholas' is all about learning, not about teaching.

The Flexcat enables the school's two Year Four teachers to work collaboratively in one open learning space together.

"It assists us to deliver instruction to students wherever they are in the larger, open classroom or to use them in the separate, smaller rooms," explained Year 4 teacher, Katlin Groom.

"It's a very helpful system for our students; they are always moving around within their learning space, engaging with each other and their own learning. The Flexcat system means that no matter where they are in the space they engage audibly with us. Their tendency is to stop and listen to instruction."

Hear and Learn's technology supports the inclusion of individual learning needs within the class and the school as a whole.

"For students with autism or other learning challenges, the audio system enables them to cope with the larger open space very well," said Ms Groom..

After some initial surprise from families at the size and volume of the newly created learning space and how it might impact students with special learning needs, teaching staff have been delighted by their adaptability to their new surroundings but they're not struggling with it at all.

“There was some concern expressed about how they would deal with the potential noise level,” explained Mr van Aanholt, “but the design of the space, the level of research and audio engineering invested in the design of the building and learning spaces has meant all students are able to stay on task and hear their teachers’ instruction very clearly.”

The learning spaces, enhanced by Hear and Learn’s technology, nurture what teaching staff describe as an engaged classroom “hum”.

While enhancing the delivery of education within St Nicholas’ classrooms, Hear and Learn’s studio technology is also supporting the advancement of education philosophy at the school.

“We want our kids working, thinking, creating and collaborating. Hear and Learn’s technology is really aiding that revolutionary turn around. That’s the way they learn the best. It’s about reasoning, working things out together.” Support for the audio technology at the school also comes from the broader St Nicholas’ community. A demonstration of the technology at Parent information evenings brought an “exceptionally positive” response.

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