

Newhome Computerised Sewing Machine

Susanna Krune

North Leamington School

Staff and pupils have welcomed the opportunity to use the machines and pupils have enjoyed the experience and have found it relatively easy to set up. Many have been able to do this without very much guidance from the teacher — others have needed some help. The advantage must be that they achieve instant success, particularly with the embroidery patterns, of which a variety are supplied.

Threading up the machine is easy to do. I was pleased to find the needle threader built into the machine. The instruction booklet states that this must be pulled down gently to be used. I did find that this meant exactly that and in fact, if it was not pulled down gently, then it came out of the machine!!

All pupils have commented on the fact that the foot pedal does not need to be used. This can take some getting used to, but overall it is an advantage not to have to use it. It leaves both hands free to guide the fabric through more accurately. It is helpful to be able to control the speed of the machine. This also gives the pupils more confidence.

The pupils in Year 8 have been working this term on the theme of running a business. They had to plan and make an item that could be sold on a charity stall. One boy wished to do some writing on the front of the banana shaped pencil case that he had made. He was shown how to thread it up and then left with the instruction booklet. Very quickly he had programmed the machine to do the writing that he wanted and stored it for the following lesson. He commented that it was easy to use and was so excited that he had done it himself!!

Some Year 11 pupils, have used the embroidery frame to produce Mothering Sunday cards — these were most successful, great fun to do and an instant success, with a high standard of finish. In fact they have spent several lunchtimes and after school practising a variety of patterns. The results resemble a commercial product.

The scanner has also been used. This too was successful with instructions that were easy to understand. It was, however, helpful to have a demonstration of this, but I am sure we could have set it up ourselves. This will enable the pupils to be very creative and achieve a good result.

I believe the machine would be invaluable in school to raise the profile of Textiles in the National Curriculum. I would certainly want to

use the machine when in Year 9 we look at running a Fast Food restaurant. They will work in groups and each have a specific responsibility. The pupils working on designing the Corporate Identity will be able to use the scanner to produce the logo for the uniforms. In fact it would be an advantage to have several machines to enable this part of the work to be done more quickly!

After only a few weeks of using this machine, we have only begun to understand its possibilities in the classroom to enhance the learning for all pupils. Certainly, I realise that SEN pupils would achieve work of a better standard more easily. All pupils would enjoy the chance of using it. Pupils who have not had the opportunity to use it so far, have been very interested in what has been produced and are anxious to use it.

It will be used later on by AS level students in Textiles, to produce some of their coursework. The students who do A level Design will be looking at it shortly as they need experience in CAD.

Looking at the programmes of Study in the National Curriculum, I believe that pupils using the machine would gain experience in the following:

■ KEY STAGE 3:

WORKING WITH MATERIALS

...use computer based systems as tools for designing and making

EXAMPLE: computer controlled machines

■ KEY STAGE 4:

WORKING WITH MATERIALS

...understand that equipment can be adapted to serve a variety of purposes ...know how computer systems control machines and equipment. ...use computer systems in designing and making ...develop craft skills ...recognise that information technology can assist the manufacturing process

EXAMPLE: use of CAD/CAM

Finally, the pupils who have used the machine have certainly found that their work has as well as facilitating National Curriculum Technology they have also found it fun to use and sometimes I wonder if we have lost the sense of wonder and excitement in the classroom lately!!

This is re-inforced when pupils ask — When can I use the new machine?