

INFORM

Summer 2008 ISSUE 14

Sharing ICT success in schools and colleges

New horizons with home access:

The e-Learning Foundation:
Should parents pay?

Becta:
Home access advice

Also inside:

The revised National Curriculum

MoLeNET update

Learning platforms





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WELCOME

to this summer term's issue of INFORM magazine, helping you to plan your home access ICT strategy.



Home access is high on the agenda for many schools and colleges at the moment. This term's INFORM magazine is full of information and advice to help you successfully plan and achieve your home access schemes.

We're delighted to feature an article from Valerie Thompson, Chief Executive of the e-Learning Foundation. Valerie's article, 'Learning Technologies, should parents pay?' reiterates the importance of home access schemes and debates who should fund them.

Neil McLean, Executive Director of the Institutional and Workforce Development team at Becta, discusses the challenges of home access schemes and provides advice on routes to success for schools and colleges, students, teachers and the community.

In Buckinghamshire, INFORM visits Aylesbury college for an insight into how they plan to spend their MoLeNET funding on mobile technology. Meanwhile, in Stockton on Tees, Blakeston

community school explains its outstanding achievements with the Kaleidos® Learning Platform.

We see how DiscoverAlive software can help you meet the National Curriculum changes toward a new skills focus. Plus, in our Newsdesk section, we catch up on the latest news and ICT advice including the new ecoquiet™ RM One 50, using just 50 watts of power, creating your own content with Fuse software and the new HP miniNote, exclusive to RM.

Finally, a big thank you to all of you who attended the INFORM conferences in April and May. If you missed out on the conferences this time around you can visit www.rm.com/conferences where all of the slides and resources are available for you to download.

Enjoy INFORM magazine!

Julie Dixon, Editor

P.S. Don't forget, you can subscribe your colleagues for free. Register them online at www.rm.com/inform/subscribe

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If you would like to know more about any of the technology featured in this edition, you can contact us in one of the following ways:

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HOME ACCESS: NEW HORIZONS

Becta leading
next generation
learning

Most schools and colleges recognise the importance of integrating technology into their curriculum. However, in order for learners to get the full benefits of technology, it needs to be realised on a wider scale. Becta wants to ensure that all students have universal access. Niel McLean, Executive Director of the Institutional and Workforce Development team at Becta, considers the challenge – and how it can be achieved.

More than one million families today don't have access to learning technology in the home and around 28% of students still don't have Internet access outside their learning environment. Becta wants to ensure that all students between the ages of 15 and 19 have access to learning where and when they need it.

A marked improvement

Research shows that when students have access to technology at home, there's a marked improvement in engagement and results. As with technology in school or college, home access allows learning that's tailored to the individual's needs and aspirations. This personalised approach helps to motivate students. It's a particularly effective way of targeting those that may be hard to reach or students with learning difficulties.

Eliminate the divide

Children without home access to the Internet tend to come from poorer families; they may already be struggling with many aspects of their education. Yet these are the very students that could benefit from the technology most. With universal access, we have the potential to eliminate the social and digital divide in our schools, colleges and communities.

Universal access also has wider benefits. Using technology raises standards of teaching and learning; if all students can access

technology outside the classroom, teachers can plan work for the whole class, including elements for students working from their homes or local libraries.

Home access taskforce

Minister Jim Knight's taskforce on home access aims to develop an achievable, sustainable strategy that results in the maximum access for learners and their families.

The taskforce can build on a real evidence-base of what works. For example, the £60 million Computer for Pupils initiative is ensuring the most deprived students receive access to learning through technology at home.



"Research shows that when students have access to technology at home there's a marked improvement in engagement and results."

The e-Learning Foundation has also done some excellent work to reduce the effect of the digital divide. The Foundation works with schools, parents and other stakeholders to ensure that all children have access to technology-based learning resources. It provides grants to schools in the UK to give the most deprived students and their families access to technology at home.



"Home access holds a number of extremely exciting possibilities for teachers."

Ensuring support

However, it's not just a matter of installing the technology, but also making sure that it's used effectively. Schools, colleges and local authorities must work with students, staff and parents to ensure all are fully supported.

Home access can be used as a tool to increase parental involvement. Using 'real time' reporting, parents can view their child's progress, attendance, behaviour and special needs, online. Many schools and colleges are already finding their own ways to engage parents. Dyke House school in Hartlepool, for example, set up a Saturday computer club to support its 'Computers in Homes' scheme, where students teach their parents how to use the Internet. The scheme has been a huge success.

Engaging teachers

Teachers are also vital stakeholders in making home access effective. Teachers need to be made aware of the benefits home access will have on students' development. Home access holds a number of extremely exciting possibilities for teachers, expanding their students' boundaries far beyond the classroom and also assisting with administration through online assessment and tracking of students' whereabouts.

Meet the challenge

Virtually all schools and colleges now have networked broadband access to the Internet. The challenge now, is to extend the network so that it offers access to learning resources, online storage, and tools for communication and management, not just within school or college, but from outside too.

As the taskforce finalises its advice, there is a wealth of support available for those who wish to improve the way they use technology. By using Becta's self-review framework, available online, schools and colleges can benchmark their use of technology against established best practice and create an action plan for improvement.

For further information, and to view the Becta self-review framework, visit www.rm.com/inform/homeaccess

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

SHOULD PARENTS PAY?

As the pressure mounts for every child to have home access to a computer and the Internet, a debate rages over who should pay. Indeed, certain parents believe that the state school system should provide everything for their child. Equally, some school governors and teachers are vehemently opposed to asking parents to make any financial contribution towards schooling costs. But are these really the views of the masses today? Are they realistic – and fair? Valerie Thompson, Chief Executive of the e-Learning Foundation shares her findings and views.

'Their parents won't pay.'

There's no doubt that parents already spend millions of pounds on technology for their children such as PSPs, Gameboys, Playstations and mobile phones. But this technology is more about social networking, communications and entertainment than it is about education.

On the positive side, 70% of school children can go online at home and over six million have access to a home computer. So, when it comes to parents buying a computer and providing the Internet for their child's education – why should it be any different? Certainly, the cost to the taxpayer of providing every schoolchild with a computer and the Internet at home suggests that, in most cases, the financial responsibility almost certainly has to rest with the family. Yet, when I visit schools and explain how providing every student with their own computer device will have to involve parents making a contribution, I'm regularly informed that 'their parents won't pay.'

The three main objections

• Education is 'free'

This premise affects both the willingness of schools to ask parents to pay for 'extras', and also parents' willingness to contribute to the cost of educating their children.

• Schools are responsible for all of a child's education

Some schools are partly to blame for a belief amongst certain parents that – other than making sure their children turn up in the morning and complete their homework – they don't have any responsibility for their child's education. As a result, parents are rarely regarded as having anything other than a marginal role in the pedagogy.

• Poorly presented evidence

Often, the positive impact of technology on educational results just isn't communicated well.



Over six million students now have access to a home computer

"Parents already spend millions of pounds on technology for their children such as PSPs, Gameboys, Playstations and mobile phones"

Eradicate the divide

The e-Learning Foundation is a national education charity committed to eradicating the 'digital divide'. Funding comes from a number of sources including government (provided through DCSF and Becta); charitable trusts (including The Mercers Company and The Vodafone Trust); corporate social responsibility programmes run by private companies; and through providing services to schools to help them minimise the administration of collecting parental donations by utilising Gift Aid (a donation management service).

Equal opportunity

Under the e-Learning Foundation approach, also described as the 'equity model', every child has the same opportunity to take part, even if their parents are unable to pay all, or some of the suggested amount. The e-Learning Foundation helps schools that have a high proportion of families who would find it hard to contribute more than a nominal amount. The grants aren't intended to be used as a general subsidy but as specific financial cover for the most needy families.

Overwhelming evidence

The e-Learning Foundation has recently surveyed the schools it works with to quantify the levels of current participation by parents in school-driven home access and e-learning programmes. The outcomes are particularly interesting because the Foundation targets its help on schools serving disadvantaged communities.

The survey results provide overwhelming evidence that parents are willing to engage financially:

- Both primary and secondary schools are winning the support of parents to contribute towards a device that is specifically intended to support learning; on average two hundred students per surveyed school have home access. Overall, about fifty thousand students from disadvantaged communities now have access to a device they can take home, as well as use at school, largely thanks to parental contributions.
- In 60% of the schools surveyed, over 60% of parents are contributing, and in 40% of the schools, that figure is over 80%.
- Over half of the schools received donations from parents of up to £10 a month while the other half received over £10. The top 10% received over £20 a month.
- Over 60% of the schools have already engaged with more than one year group and 81% plan to extend their programme to another year group in September 2008. So, this is beyond an initiative or pilot; these are sustainable programmes with no automatic government grants or initiatives propping them up. These projects are parent powered! ▶

"Every child has the same opportunity to take part, even if their parents are unable to pay all or some of the suggested amount."



**Objections encountered by schools:
e-Learning Foundation survey of schools running equity programmes, 2008**



- Parents: 53%
- Product/supplier quality: 15%
- Financial risk: 12%
- Administration workload: 4%
- Timescales involved: 4%
- Infrastructure needed: 5%
- Teachers: 4%
- Safety/security: 1%
- Local Authority: 1%
- Internet access problems: 1%

The problem with parents

This year the e-Learning Foundation will have collected £1m of donations via direct debits from parents. It is estimated that the same amount again will have been collected in cash payments made direct to schools; something the e-Learning Foundation intends to help schools deal with in the coming months.

However, when we asked schools what were the biggest problems encountered in getting their schemes running, and keeping them going, parents were cited as the biggest headache. So what is it about parents that presents schools with a challenge?

Some schools believe that parents are unwilling to support home access programmes because of:

- Their concerns over traditional values (handwriting, reading books, playing outside).
- Worries over the safety aspects of wireless technology and carrying computers to and from home. (The recent Panorama programme was particularly unhelpful, and statistics on the low level of incidents of children having their computers stolen are often ignored).
- Activists (very occasionally, small groups of difficult parents try to disrupt the scheme on points of principle).
- A belief the State should provide.
- A belief that parents are unwilling to financially contribute.



A changing world

At present, the digital divide is still increasing, but the world is changing with a growing understanding by both parents and teachers of the benefits of home access. This is being propelled by the growth of learning platforms in schools, falling prices of laptop computers and a wider range of affordable connectivity options such as cable, satellite, WiMax, hot spots, 3G dongles and built in SIM cards.

All these changes conspire to make home access more affordable. As the learning gets more interactive, personalised, meaningful and motivating, the argument for parents to invest in these resources for their children becomes even more compelling.

Parents will pay

The evidence is clear. When the case is put across well by schools, parents will pay. The potential to use technology to improve the education prospects of children from low income families is significant, but the full



Valerie Thompson is Chief Executive of the e-Learning Foundation, a national educational charity dedicated to eliminating the digital divide for schoolchildren. In March 2001, Valerie was invited to get the e-Learning Foundation operational. Now in its seventh year, the e-Learning Foundation focuses on helping schools by using a sustainable approach to ensure every child has access to learning technologies outside the classroom and especially at home.

potential will only be realised when schools and families work together and respect each other's roles as joint investors and educators of their children.

If you are interested in addressing the digital divide, want to ensure that every student has home and school access to learning technologies, and are interested in exploring their eligibility for grant funding, you can contact the e-Learning Foundation via www.rm.com/inform/e-learning



"A £1 a week contribution from parents could enable a school to provide a device per student."

IT'S ALL CHANGE NORTH OF THE BORDER

Scotland's schools are undergoing the biggest shake up in education for a generation. At the heart of this change is Curriculum for Excellence, a review of the current curriculum, aiming to emphasise the professional autonomy of the teacher.



Curriculum for Excellence gives greater freedom to engage learners aged 3-18 in relevant learning experiences, all within a single coherent curriculum. Central to this evolution is Glow. Glow is Scotland's schools' national intranet, ultimately connecting over 800,000 educators and learners safely and securely. Delivered by RM in partnership with Learning and Teaching Scotland, Glow will transform the way education is delivered – with educational ambition and technology working together to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

No other country's education system has such a nationwide service, providing an exciting new way of finding, storing, delivering and sharing curriculum guidance and media-rich resources, thus enabling personalised learning opportunities.

There are several components that make up Glow and these tools can be used at any time and anywhere there is internet access, to help facilitate a stimulating and exciting learning experience.

Glow Groups include virtual classrooms, online communities and shared areas for learning and collaboration.

Glow Chat is a spontaneous and informal means for groups to communicate using online chat rooms.

Glow Learn enables you to monitor student progress, and provides learners with access to structured content and tools to organise and search for digital resources.

Glow Mailing Lists support communication by distributing information to large numbers of people and facilitates discussion by groups both within and external to Glow.

Glow Meet is a web-conferencing tool. It allows users to give live presentations, work together on projects or even teach classes through Glow.

Glow Messenger allows users to exchange messages with others online immediately, through an electronic messaging service.

It is early days for Glow. Almost 50% of Scottish Local Authorities are now live and in various stages of piloting, with more joining week by week. The added value that Glow can bring to the classroom is already being witnessed. Examples that typify the growing momentum as teachers and classes connect within the Glow environment include:

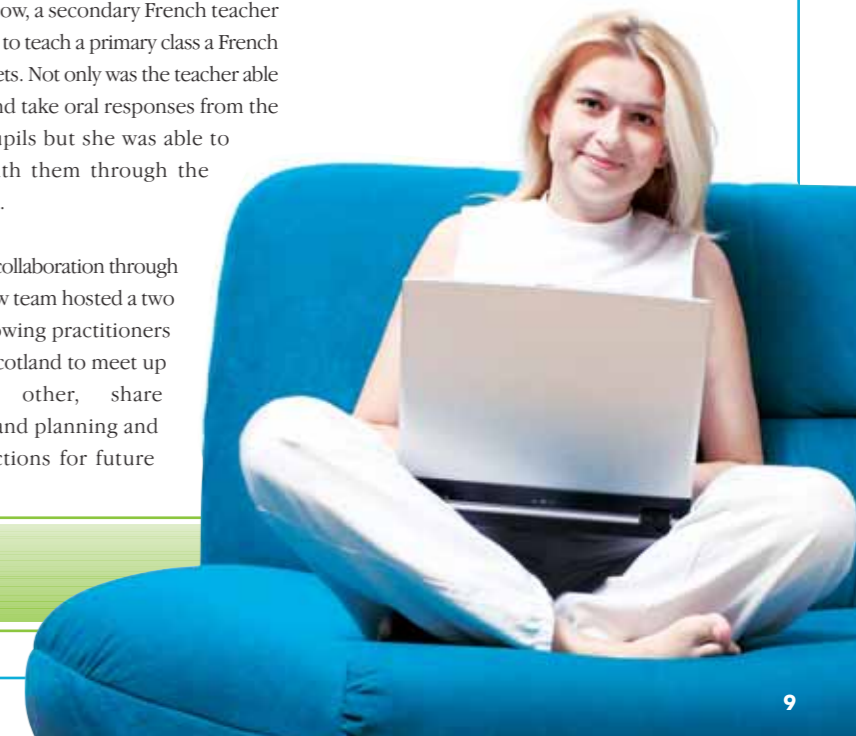
- One class recently web-conferenced with Malawi, sharing presentations and quizzing each other face-to-face about culture and lifestyle.
- Six year olds are posting their homework online.
- A virtual chess club is operating in the remote Western Isles.
- A city centre school and a small school in Shetland are working collaboratively to compare and contrast urban and rural life.
- A 5-14 school in the Western Isles uses Glow Meet to web conference with former pupils of the school to read French poetry.
- Through Glow, a secondary French teacher went online to teach a primary class a French lesson on pets. Not only was the teacher able to talk to and take oral responses from the primary pupils but she was able to interact with them through the whiteboard.



collaborative working. As these contacts and connections are made across the Local Authorities, the Glow family expands and the expertise and benefits are shared.

Glow allows for an unprecedented freedom for teachers and students alike to communicate and collaborate across Scotland and beyond. In the hands of educators, Glow opens up endless possibilities to engage learners in relevant and enriching tasks, constrained only by their imagination.

"Glow will transform the way education is delivered"



To find out more about Glow, visit www.rm.com/inform/glow

AYLESBURY COLLEGE:

A PATHWAY TO ACCESS FOR ALL

Aylesbury College in Buckinghamshire is one of thirty two further education colleges to have been awarded MoLeNET funding back in the autumn of 2007. With their plans now well in progress, INFORM paid Aylesbury College a visit to find out exactly how they had decided to spend their one hundred thousand pounds.



The college

Founded in 1962, Aylesbury College is one of the most radical buildings in Buckinghamshire. The college is a focal point for the Aylesbury Vale community, delivering a huge range of post-16 vocational courses and training, as well as GCSEs and A-levels. Aylesbury College provides for 2,000 full-time and 4,500 part-time learners.

Two years ago, Aylesbury College was part of an impressive new build project comprising hairdressing and beauty salons, training kitchens, science facilities, art and photography rooms, sports facilities, language labs, a media centre and 3 large ICT suites.

MoLeNET funding

Aylesbury College fought off fierce competition for MoLeNET funding with its innovative proposal for the use of mobile devices by those with learning difficulties, or Pathways learners as they are called at the college.

Sarah Newall, Deputy Director for Teaching and Learning at the college explains: "We needed to improve access to a wide range of ICT equipment to cater to all our Pathways learners to help them move forward in life; into continued education, independent living or into employment. We applied for £100,000 of MoLeNET funding, working closely with Wildkey, a partnership between scientists at Oxford Brookes University and the software developer Adit."

Challenging process

Putting the proposal together was a challenging and time consuming process, including a presentation to the Learning and Skills Network at the Oval cricket ground conference centre. Finally, in early October,



What is MoLeNET?

The Mobile Learning Network (MoLeNET) is a unique collaborative approach to encouraging, supporting, expanding and promoting mobile learning, primarily in the English further education sector, via supported shared cost mobile learning projects.

Collaboration at national level involves colleges and the Learning and Skills Council sharing the cost of projects that introduce or expand mobile learning.

MoLeNET's support and evaluation programme includes technical and pedagogic advice, materials development, continuing professional development, mentoring, facilitation of peer-to-peer support, networking and resource sharing, and research and evaluation.

the college found out they had been awarded the full £100,000 they had bid for.

Pamela Forchione, E-Learning Development Officer at the college was delighted to learn the good news: "It was very exciting to find out we had been awarded the funding. Often, we don't have the money to do the things that we would really like to do. This has given us the opportunity to buy in new resources for learners and be really innovative. It's brilliant."

Network and devices

So far the college has used the funding to implement a college wide wireless network



and has purchased a variety of devices including iPod Touches, RM Asus minibooks, Smartphones, UMPCs, video cameras and Apple MacBooks.

These devices will be used by Pathways learners both in college and in outreach centres in the local community. For example, a group of learners on a small animal care course, visit Thrift Farm in Buckinghamshire once a week to learn practical skills. Both the iPod touches and the RM Asus miniBooks will be used for video work when the learners are unable to get close to the animals, and also for assessment, to show the college what they have achieved outside the classroom. Another group of Pathways learners will use the devices in the same way on their catering skills course at Well Street day centre in Buckinghamshire.

"A big part of successful learning is getting the learners excited and engaged," enthuses Sarah. "If an ICT device can do that, that's great. It makes the teachers job a whole lot easier. The learners are really motivated and keen to get on."

Blackboard VLE

The staff at Aylesbury College look to promote independent learning skills and strive to provide a variety of teaching and learning delivery methods. The college uses the Blackboard virtual learning environment to assist in doing this, allowing learners to access resources anywhere and at any time.

Long term strategy

MoLeNET supports all of the successful colleges by assigning them a mentor for advice and guidance on achieving goals further to receiving the funding. Already benefiting fifty Pathways learners at Aylesbury College, the equipment purchased with the MoLeNet money will eventually benefit all staff and learners as part of the college's long term ILT strategy.

Opportunities for all

The MoLeNET project is not only benefitting learners; staff have the opportunity to take part in a training programme designed to improve skills in the use of mobile devices, and create resources using Microsoft Photostory and quiz making software.

Concludes Sarah, "The benefits to the Pathways learners are massive. Not only that, the entire college has use of the new wireless network. This is a really exciting move forward for all of us."



"A big part of successful learning is getting the learners excited and engaged. If an ICT device can do that, that's great."



@Bristol
"A lovely venue and lots of new ideas gained from talking to RM staff."

INFORM CONFERENCES 2008 PARTNERSHIPS FOR LEARNING

This year, RM made a number of changes to its conferences; by moving them to April and May, introducing 4 exciting new venues, and also hosting a bigger exhibition! As a result, this year's events were attended by over 450 delegates including secondary school leaders, college principals and local authority advisers. Thank you to all of you that joined us.

Keynote speeches

This year, the keynote speeches were delivered by Mick Waters, Stephen Heppell, John Dunford and Tim Brighouse. Each shared their thoughts and experiences on the conference theme of Partnerships for Learning.

Guest school presentations

Our guest school presentations continued the partnerships theme. Through a variety of examples, our school speakers explored the benefits of collaboration and also some of the challenges they have faced. Partnerships, Federations and Trusts are now becoming commonplace and these sessions provided valuable and practical advice.

RM sessions

The RM sessions covered two diverse areas. The first looked at sustainable ICT. We shared examples from our own 'Green RM' project as well as looking at technologies that can make

a difference in your school or college. The second session, a Shared Learning Journey with the use of Second Life, explored learning in the future and how essential it is to ensure that the decisions currently being made around learning platforms need to be future proof.

Lessons shared

With many schools and colleges facing some form of rebuild or refurbishment, the Buildings for the Future: Lessons Learnt, Lessons Shared session provided current examples of innovative approaches and areas for consideration.

Optional sessions

Throughout the day, our optional sessions covered a range of topics including e-assessment, home access and parental support and a practical session on Podium podcasting. The Podium session was a very popular choice and received

excellent feedback – find out more about Podium on www.rm.com/inform/podium. This year, our new, informal style provided more opportunity for networking, attending optional sessions and looking at the exhibition, which included Amazing Interactives, LEGO MINDSTORMS education and SpaceKraft sensory products among others.

Your views

If you attended one of the RM INFORM conferences this year, email Tania Fisher at tafisher@rm.com with your thoughts about the venues, themes, content and format – your feedback is greatly valued and is essential in helping us as we begin work on next year's events!



ALL OF THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE RESOURCES ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO SHARE AND USE AT WWW.RM.COM/CONFERENCES



To find out how other FE colleges are using their MoleNET money and to see a video case study of the Aylesbury College new build project, visit www.rm.com/inform/molenet

SECURE LOGIN
INFORMATION
RESOURCES
COMMUNICATION
COLLABORATION TOOLS
SCHOOL NEWS

BLAKESTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL: 1,000 TIMES BETTER TOGETHER

1,000 hits a month: that's the interest a new learning platform is attracting from the parents, teachers and students at Blakeston community school in Norton, Stockton on Tees. Having recently invested in RM's Kaleidos® Learning Platform, INFORM finds out what the improved communication really means to everyone involved.



Gone are the days of a paper notice board and register books in Norton. By logging onto their new portal, the whole community is instantly updated with the latest school news and information. The really keen students can even check the notices before they get to the school gates! Students, parents and teachers, using single secure logins can access information, resources, communication and collaboration tools all in one place.



Kaleidos learning platform screenshot

Personal online space

All students have a personal 'virtual space' and the ability to assume responsibility for their own learning and progression. With timetable information available, the ability to upload work, track progress and see their attendance data, students are able to work and learn anytime, anywhere.

Philip Carr, Head of IT is pleased with the results: "Communication within the school and within the community has been significantly improved. We can target information at a specific audience quickly and effectively. The portal allows teachers to track student progress with ease and see whether they are making enough progress, and if not, put an intervention strategy in place"

Teachers can set work over the Kaleidos® Learning Platform portal and have the ability to use a wide range of feature-rich resources

to create innovative and exciting lessons that inspire all.

Staying in touch

Often it can be difficult for parents and guardians to keep up with life in school. Now, they can easily keep an occasional eye on students' progress – checking attendance, reviewing work set and when it's handed in. By becoming more aware, they can swiftly offer support where needed.

Says Philip: "Parents can now access information about their children from lots of sources so they are not relying on just coming in for parents' evenings twice a year. They can access the data they need when they want it. The students have responded really well and it's helping them to become more independent. On a regular basis we've had about one hundred and twenty parents log-on each day."

Healthy living too

Norton residents can also access the portal to find out about the school facilities that are open to the public. With a sports specialist status, Blakeston school has facilities that the whole community share including its Wellness Centre gym. Russell Baxter, Community Development Manager, observes: "Since we launched the Wellness Centre interest group on the portal, we've seen figures go up by 75%."

"Communication within the school and within the community has been significantly improved"

KALEIDOS® UPDATE!

The Kaleidos® Learning Platform Portal+ module is moving to a new platform: Microsoft® Office SharePoint Server 2007. RM has listened to your feedback and this new release adds a host of features such as blogs and wikis, supporting easier communication and collaborative working. There's enhanced e-portfolios and some great portal management tools too.

Kaleidos® continues to lead the way with parental engagement thanks to the student dashboard presenting a comprehensive view of key information such as attendance and assessment data. The collaboration tools allow parents to easily communicate with the school.

These developments, continue to demonstrate that the Kaleidos® Learning Platform is an ideal solution to support the current and future needs of education.



Creating better access for the community, greater involvement for parents, and achieving an enthusiastic response from the students, the Kaleidos® Learning Platform has clearly brought Blakeston's community together.



To find out more about the benefits of Kaleidos® visit www.rm.com/inform/kaleidos

A NEW SKILLS FOCUS:

THE REVISED NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The recent changes to the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 introduce a new focus where schools will be expected to equip all their learners with the necessary skills to enter the adult world, whether they begin employment or move on to higher education. DiscoverAlive, an innovative collection of interactive classroom resources for whole-class teaching and student use, can help teachers meet the challenges of this new focus.

DiscoverAlive?

DiscoverAlive is a collection of interactive classroom resources which can be used to enhance subject teaching and learning at Key Stages 3 and 4. Spanning 7 subjects (English, maths, biology, geography, history, French and Spanish) activities are designed by subject experts and focus on key concepts and skills that benefit most from an ICT approach.

“In each topic, students are encouraged to develop and present their thinking in a considered and persuasive way”.

What's changed?

The new National Curriculum frameworks have significantly reduced the prescribed content within each subject. Instead, they ask teachers to deliver Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) and Functional Skills (FS) embedded within learning episodes.

Schools are being encouraged to teach across traditional subject boundaries and to increase collaboration between different subjects' staff. They must aim to cultivate students who are confident, well-rounded and successful learners.

Supporting teachers

Whilst schools will choose their own routes to implement the changes, teachers can be supported through the use of appropriately designed resources. The DiscoverAlive 14-16 range of curriculum software can be used to offer students opportunities to develop, apply and show evidence of skill acquisition. All DiscoverAlive subject-based resources include a mix of engaging whole-class, group and individual student activities that support key curriculum topics through the effective use of ICT.



English resources

Within DiscoverAlive 14-16 English, students are encouraged to develop and present their thinking in a considered and persuasive way. **Whole-class activities** promote discussion and support the teaching of communication methods such as descriptive, informative, persuasive writing and speaking techniques. **Quick-fire student activities** reinforce fundamental skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Independent student activities consolidate and embed skills within realistic and engaging

scenarios. Examples include:

- Preparing a broadcast speech on whether violent video games should be banned;
- Debating the case for a new town hall in a local community;
- Compiling a journalistic article informing teenagers about the realities of bullying.

Within each scenario there is an emphasis on establishing good practice to apply to other situations. Each activity contains source material, guidance and a structured approach to the task, but the form and detail of the output are determined by the student.

Having reviewed the sources of information and points of view, the student is encouraged to plan their case in the DiscoverAlive Jotter and structure it into letter form.

Mathematics resources

In a similar vein to the English, DiscoverAlive 14-16 mathematics can also be used to develop Functional Skills. For example, whole-class activities include:

- the application of ratios in real-world contexts;
- the appropriate use and interpretation of graphical statistical representations;
- the construction and interpretation of distance-time and speed-time graphs.

Independent student activities again, position learning within realistic settings and establish effective problem-solving approaches for the student.

This can be illustrated by the DiscoverAlive statistical investigation 'On the beach'. Here, students are given two populations of data (shell measurements) to compare, using a variety of statistical measures and presentation forms. Having planned the investigation, the student uses the spreadsheet to perform the analysis and presentation, before writing a report setting out their hypotheses, statistical methods, results and conclusions.

Activities such as 'On the beach' give students the scope to demonstrate reasoning skills in drawing, validating and justifying conclusions – in line with the Functional Skills objectives.



DiscoverAlive software

Personal, learning and thinking skills

The personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) provide a framework for describing the qualities needed for success in learning and life. The framework comprises six groups of skills for students to learn, including being:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

Functional skills

Functional skills (FS) are those core elements of English, mathematics and ICT that provide an individual with the essential knowledge and understanding that will enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.

Activities from DiscoverAlive (at both 14-16 and 11-14 ages) have clear relevance to the breadth of PLTS and FS, giving students the opportunity to:

- develop organisational and investigative skills;
- solve problems and show understanding in imaginative and creative ways;
- work independently and in groups;
- engage in issues relevant to them and their communities;
- reflect on their learning.

To find out more about DiscoverAlive and the ways it can support your students and staff, visit www.rm.com/inform/discoveralive

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ALIVE

MAESTRO PROJECT REVEALS BEST USE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES



A Lancaster University project investigating the best use of digital resources for teaching and learning has just published its findings.

The three year Maestro project followed the progress of year 7 to year 9 pupils across thirty three schools. The research, led by Don Passey, Senior Research Fellow at Lancaster University's Department of Educational Research, investigated the features of digital resources that promote effective learning. It looked at different learner groups and a range of pedagogical roles facilitated by the teacher. It also compared SATs results with levels of digital resource use, to identify quantifiable benefits of teaching and learning with digital resources.

The report concludes that digital resources support learning and make a positive difference to the learning environment. It finds that it is reasonable to expect a statistically significant positive gain in subject outcomes when digital resources are used, if they are selected and used in appropriate ways.

The key findings of this report can be transferred to other contexts beyond the Maths and MathsAlive resources this research was based on. DiscoverAlive and MultiMedia Science School are resources that deliver in a similar way.

For full details, download the report from www.rm.com/maestro

NEW PERSPECTIVES WITH 3D TECHNOLOGY

Imagine a classroom where students put on 3D glasses and the lessons come alive in front of their eyes. Visualise chemical reactions floating in the room, see organs of the body as they carry out their usual daily functions or take journeys through 3D virtual worlds like Second life and Google earth.

Amazing Interactives impressed delegates at the RM INFORM conferences this spring and their 3D technology for learning is creating quite a stir in schools and colleges across the UK.

Find out more about 3D in the classroom at www.rm.com/inform/amazinginteractives

Acklam Grange School in Middlesbrough, for instance, is planning to build their new BSF funded school in the virtual world of Second Life before it is built in real life, so it can be visualized by parents, governors and teachers during the consultation process.

The system comes with historical and literary based immersive environments. There are also visualization packages that cover the cardio vascular and respiratory systems and the senses.

WATCH THE WESTLANDS SCHOOL MINIBOOK FILM

Earlier this year, Westlands school in Kent took delivery of four hundred RM Asus miniBooks. INFORM, armed with a video camera, recently caught up with staff and students to find out how they were getting on with their new devices.



Head teacher, Jon Whitcombe gives the miniBook his full backing. "The children just seem to love the miniBooks and the impact of them towards motivation for learning has been tremendous."

The students love them too. Harry Parkhill of year 10 is pleased with his, saying: "I think the miniBook is quite cool, its got everything on it, its really small and it fits in your bag. I use it for the Internet and my coursework."

Find out what the head teacher, assistant head teacher, network manager and the students have to say about the miniBook in full by watching the Westlands school film.

Visit www.rm.com/inform/westlands

FREE HOME ACCESS AND ICT ADVICE FROM BECTA

Becta offers free advice and information for schools and colleges on home access and ICT. Several publications are available to order or download. Titles include:

- Universal access and parental engagement: a guide for school leaders.
- Technology strategy for further education, skills and regeneration: an implementation plan for 2008-2011.

For more information, visit www.rm.com/inform/becta



CONSUMES LESS ENERGY THAN A LIGHT BULB! THE RM ECOQUIET® 50



RM is proud to introduce the latest, most energy efficient additions to its desktop PC range; the ecoquiet® RM ONE 50 and ecoquiet® RM PC 50.

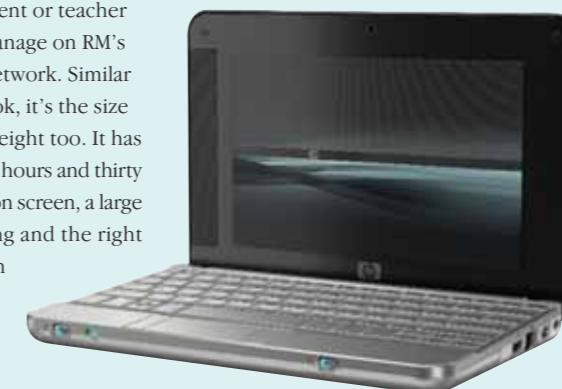
Both not only consume considerably less energy than a standard desktop PC, but amazingly use even less than a standard light bulb! Operating on less than 50 watts under stress (including a monitor), the ecoquiet® 50 will be the first in the UK to take advantage of the new Atom™ processor from Intel.

Suitable for everyday ICT needs in the classroom, the ecoquiet® RM ONE 50 and ecoquiet® RM PC 50 are available for the same price as a standard RM ONE or desktop PC. Pre-order yours online today for shipment in July.

To find out more visit www.rm.com/inform/ecoquiet50

RM EXCLUSIVE! THE NEW HP MININOTE

The new HP miniNote is a small, robust mini-notebook for student or teacher use. Plus, it's easy to manage on RM's Community Connect network. Similar to the RM Asus miniBook, it's the size of an A5 pad and lightweight too. It has a long battery life of four hours and thirty minutes, a high resolution screen, a large keyboard for easy typing and the right operating system to join your network.



Visit www.rm.com/inform/mininote for more details

PRODUCE CREATIVE CONTENT WITH FUSE



Fuse Creator enables teachers and students to create engaging, interactive digital activities. Fuse is also an ideal partner product for a learning platform.

The content you produce can be run locally, on a web page, distributed as a pack for use in VLEs or be imported into a learning platform. Users can upload their own images, text and sound files which can be assembled into a range of interaction types, including drag and drop, quizzes, linking lines and sequencing. It's easy!

Orders are being taken now and this brand new product will be available in August. Watch this space...

For more information on Fuse including screen shots and a PDF, visit www.rm.com/inform/fuse

ENTHUSIAST POSTER GIVE-AWAY!



INFORM magazine has some free posters to give away to brighten up your classrooms.

All you need to do is email us to let us know which RM products you are enthusiastic about and why. A poster or two will then be winging their way over to you.

Send your emails to the INFORM editor, julie.dixon@rm.com

Designed for education, built with kids in mind.

ICT is an important tool in your classroom. However, sometimes accidents do happen. You'll want to invest in PCs that can survive the rigours of the day. We've listened to feedback from schools and colleges and the new RM Mobile One notebook and RM One PC preinstalled with Windows Vista® Business are built with kids in mind.

"The kids love them, they absolutely love them!"

**Peter Coates, Headteacher –
Wednesfield High School, Wednesfield**



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Uses less than
50 watts!



SURPRISE US AND WIN THE PC OF YOUR CHOICE!

Got a great story about a desktop or notebook PC that met an unusually sticky end at your school or college? Go to www.rm.com/kidsinmind, tell us about it, and you could win a free RM One PC or RM Mobile One notebook with Windows Vista® Business preinstalled.



RM Mobile One notebook

Put our PCs on trial!

Put an RM One PC or RM Mobile One notebook preinstalled with Windows Vista® Business to the test, with a 14-day no obligation trial. Request one now at: www.rm.com/kidsinmind

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