LEARNING PLATFORMS

NEXT GENERATION LEARNING

Becta leading next generation learning

Get started with your learning platform

- Open up learning opportunities for all pupils
- Improve effectiveness and communication
- Manage and monitor learning and teaching outcomes

The Essentials

Used effectively, learning platforms open up learning opportunities for all pupils in school and extend learning outside the classroom and school. Effective communication and collaboration help make teaching more efficient. Learning platforms also enable school leaders to develop new practices to manage and monitor learning and teaching outcomes.

"The key to success has been the positive 'have a go' attitude of our teachers. We continue to take small manageable steps so as not to get overwhelmed and have been backed up by the provision of good quality training and support from the county advisers."

Headteacher, Primary School

Key steps to a whole school approach to learning platforms:

- Ensure you have commitment from the head teacher and senior management to taking learning platforms forward.
- Put effective use of learning platforms at the centre of your planning.
- Get the whole school on board with you – involving all staff, parents and students.
- Put aside time and budget to train your staff.
- Find out by visiting schools or from case studies what has been successful in other schools.

Next steps

Review:

- What worked well? What needs more work?
- How can the learning platform support your school's priorities?

Remember:

- The self-review framework can help: **www.becta.org.uk/schools/selfreviewframework**

Key Benefits

Get started...

You may have a learning platform in your school but be unsure about the best ways to introduce it and get the best results. This publication uses information gathered from schools that have already had the experience. It lists a number of ways that schools are getting early benefits from engaging staff, learners and parents.

Using these ideas you should be able to see some of the real potential that technology can offer your school.

Using your learning platform regularly will enable you to decide where and how technology can effectively support learning, teaching and management in your school.

In spring 2010, we will make further evidence-based practice and research available to show how you can get 'more' from the technology. This is just the start...

Focus on learning through technology

Most children are comfortable with technology. Research shows pupils learn best when they feel they belong and feel empowered, safe and successful. The learning platform can provide them with new, engaging learning experiences and support the development of effective learning techniques for all learning styles. It enables children to participate and continue their learning in a safe, familiar environment, both inside and outside school.

- Give everyone a voice through discussion forums and blogs – not all learners feel confident contributing to discussion in class and many never ask questions; this allows teachers to get a better insight into the individual students' capabilities and needs.
- Provide pupils with access to good quality online content relevant to their work – having access to resources online from a number of sources allows pupils to make their own choices and develop independent learning skills. Technology allows teachers to move away from photocopied worksheets to use rich, exciting, interactive and engaging resources.
- Encourage collaborative working – we know young people like to keep in touch. Learning platforms allow collaboration on short-focused or longer project work.
- Ensure pupils can continue learning at distance – when pupils are unable to attend school regularly, they can continue learning and keep in contact with their peers via the learning platform with minimum disruption.
- Help teachers to monitor progress – through setting open tasks and activities, sharing videos, podcasts and other media, teachers build a record of progress and support learner assessment.

Enable pupils to take ownership

The learning platform can help learners take ownership of their learning and give them a voice to develop self confidence. Communities on the learning platform allow learners to try their ideas and comment on ideas of others. Teachers can also benefit as they share and develop lessons and activities. Pupils are then able to explore these at their own pace, reinforcing and extending as necessary.

- Ensure teachers create online communities – enabling pupils to share comments, feedback or assessment from the teacher or student peers, as well as resources to support class and home learning activities. Ensure a mix of subjects and less formal groups, but insist on acceptable use at all times.
- Publish pupils' work to give them a real audience for their writing – especially through collaborative writing projects that encourage peer to peer support and extend pupil learning to the home and different audiences. Technology gives an opportunity for a worldwide audience, but make sure learners understand and act safely when publishing.
- Give pupils access to experts and adults other than their teacher – sharing specialist teachers and experts, authors or poets encourages pupils to ask questions, develop thinking and solve problems. Live chat rooms, used appropriately, can be a cost-effective way of having access to an expert. Interviewing techniques, question preparation and follow-up are essential skills that can be honed using this.

Help pupils make a smooth transition

The learning platform offers schools tools to support transition between phases, enabling improved collaboration and communication as learners move through different school stages and years. It can also support 14–19 programmes.

- Get to know your new teacher – although the new teacher may be in the same school it may help the younger children and their parents and carers to have an area for sharing information, routines and allow questions.
- Create an 'interest space' or discussion area – enabling pupils in one phase to ask questions of pupils in the next phase about things that are worrying them.
- Work jointly across schools – joint project working across several schools avoids the cost and time constraints of transportation. Pupil mentoring has worked well for many years – learning platforms make this even better and stronger.
- Share everyday information, routines and expectations safely and securely – including hints and tips, targets, areas to work on, personal action plans, progress marks and other data.
- Transfer previous work and content in e-portfolios – work may be completed as part of a transition project. It could be part of a pupil's education journey so far. E-portfolios can help make a pupil feel they are recognised, they belong, and are safe and successful.

Get parents actively involved

Research shows that parental involvement in their child's learning has a positive impact on standards. Using the learning platform can help parents and carers benefit from enhanced communication with the school as they actually see what and how their child is learning.

- Ensure parents have access to important information – the learning platform reinforces communications by letter – which are often lost – and enables parents to get information, eg. before a school trip, share photos and details of things their child has done.
- Support learning at home by giving parents access to online resources for learners – enabling parents and carers to support learning at home, talk about activities, consolidate skills and develop a shared understanding.

Give staff the professional tools they need

Collaborating effectively and sharing resources, teachers can also benefit from the learning platform. Schools have found that creating a virtual staffroom is a great way to introduce the learning platform to staff and governors. A virtual staffroom works well in both small and larger schools.

- Ensure staff check into their user accounts daily – ask everyone to check into the virtual staffroom. Put notices and updates on the front page. Remove the need to send notes round the school and complete the calendar.
- Help the environment – making all policy documents, planning and other notices available on the learning platform reduces the workloads for teaching staff, supports staff and frees them up to focus on other areas of development and organisation. It also reduces paper and print costs and helps the environment.
- Communicate with learners and parents / carers – use the learning platform for clubs and information about school and community activities.
- Communicate with parents / carers – open the platform to parents, keeping them informed and up-to-date and strengthening home–school relations.

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