



Improving internal communication at Sale Grammar

Three years ago Sale Grammar needed a system to improve internal communication and reduce the 'corridor culture.' In this article ICT Manager, Simon Rowlands explains how Microsoft's SharePoint technology is offering much more than this.

"Whenever I left my office I was bombarded with queries from staff. We developed the intranet using Microsoft's SharePoint technology to be a one-stop-shop to answer all staff and student questions; most of what they want to know is on there. The intranet includes student, staff and governor areas for their documents and surveys, general document storage, a staff calendar, an IT case logging area, online help facility and an online asset inventory. Our latest development is the SIMS Web Parts that allow staff and later parents and pupils to access SIMS from home."

"Currently we are giving teacher access to the SIMS Learning Gateway and in future will open this to parents and students. Teachers can access key student data and all assessment data. The students will be able to access their own information, for example their timetable. At present they can access the Learning Platform, see upcoming school events and participate in mini-polls really easily and effectively. Parents will be able to see all the key information about their child, including assessment tracking reports, attendance data, and end-of-year reports. The SIMS active directory provisioning tool has made setting up all the accounts for our staff, students and parents really straightforward. All the data is in SIMS and the software sets up all the access credentials automatically saving time."

SIMS from home – allowing staff to work flexibly

"The staff see clear advantages in having the choice of completing their assessments from home. In the past we would export information from SIMS into Excel, staff could enter assessments at home and we'd import these back into SIMS. Administratively this was a nightmare and there were often errors. From home teachers now have access to SIMS so they can see the child's profile: their photograph, attendance and their reports."

Learning Gateway brings SIMS into classroom

"As a school we are developing our use of SIMS and the SIMS Web Parts thus allowing easy access to SIMS in all classrooms, via the internet. This is a significant plus for teachers and is saving them time in finding student details and entering assessments. Our next plan is to role out attendance in the classroom as currently this is done through OMR sheets."

Giving the students a voice – Student Council votes almost triple

"Using the system, students can vote for their student councillor. In the past we used a paper system and would expect a 35% return, now with online voting 95% of students vote."

CASE STUDY

Sale Grammar

Engaging with parents

"All our parents have access to the internet and they are positive about accessing their child's SIMS record via the Learning Gateway. We see the Gateway as another step in parental engagement and support of the school and it fulfils our requirement of online reporting for the 2010 agenda."

Technical tips for other schools

Windows SharePoint Services 3.0

"We use the free version from Microsoft that means for teacher and in-school access we have no licenses to pay and only pay for the in house development and support of the product as well as the SIMS Web Parts. For student and parent access, out of school, we purchased a School Connector License. This has saved us a significant amount of money."

Supporting SIMS – Provisioning Server

"Because SIMS and IT generally is so important to us it needs to work and we need to support it well. The Learning Gateway requires a school to be organised technically and the provisioning server is key to this. Without this it wouldn't work."



Focus on Sale Grammar

Sale Grammar is a co-educational selective school in Trafford specialising in the visual arts and science. Visit their website to find out more www.salegrammar.co.uk

Microsoft's SharePoint Technology

To find out more about this technology and the free download please visit the Microsoft website: www.microsoft.com/education

SIMS Learning Gateway

Visit www.sims.co.uk/learninggateway to find out more about the SIMS Web Parts.