



# Engaging Pupils

Focus on **Learning platforms**

Primary/whole school

## Top tips from Shacklewell Primary School

- Take it slowly – you can't do everything at once!
- Identify a couple of enthusiastic and confident staff members to lead the way
- Think about how a learning platform will work for you
- Commit some time to planning – it will save time in the long-run
- Take small steps so you can refine and adapt as you go
- Remember that the end result will be a positive impact on teaching and learning

Shacklewell Primary School is a large primary school with over 400 pupils between the ages of three and eleven. Partnership with families and the community is key to the success of the school and the use of their learning platform is now moving towards further enhancing this partnership.

Shane Wilkie, ICT Co-ordinator and Yr 5 teacher, explains how Shacklewell got started; "Our starting point with our Regional Broadband Consortium's (RBC) learning platform was through attendance at various RBC events, which gave a great insight into what was available. Initially I tried a few things out in school and started introducing different aspects of the technology to staff. There is no doubt that to begin with it was overwhelming for many of the staff here! But the important point in my mind was to demonstrate that this wasn't just another temporary initiative but that it offered real potential for teaching and learning."

Email was introduced first to get staff involved in using the technology. 18 months on everyone, including the kitchen staff, has their own email account and people are starting to use their personal online space. Because Shacklewell is fully networked, teachers tend to use this system for sharing files and resources at present. However, the platform is increasingly being used to upload work that can then be undertaken from home, meaning staff can easily download it to complete in the evenings, weekends or holidays and then access it via their personal space when they are back in school.

However, it is on the creation of pupil-focused activities that Shacklewell is now concentrating. Shane continues; "For pupils we first created class communities, which would allow information to be shared online. One of our Yr 6 teachers, who was particularly enthusiastic and has high ICT skills, started the ball rolling with individual pupil pages that enabled Yr 6 to have their own community. Yr 5 were then also included so that we could create an upper key stage 2 forum through which both years could work together."

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*Shane Wilkie, ICT co-ordinator and Yr 6 teacher, Shacklewell Primary*

As confidence and experience has grown throughout the school, use of the learning platform has been introduced to Yr 4 and, to a lesser extent, to Yr 3. A half term project on recipes provided the ideal opportunity for Yr 4 pupils to get involved. The pupils had been learning about writing recipe instructions and this led to the creation of an interactive online recipe book, giving instant results which pupils could share with their parents and other members of the school community.

“The response we get from pupils using the learning platform is great,” confirms Shane. “We have recently been working on performance and poetry, basing activities around Louis Armstrong’s “It’s a Wonderful World”. As soon as pupils have the freedom to use different media, their enthusiasm and engagement with the project increases. Within a 45-minute period they can get something published online, using digital pictures, digital video or Powerpoint, which far exceeds what they would deliver using paper and pen.”

The next aim is to increase the use of the platform for virtual discussion and to extend use out of school hours. Shane concludes, “With hindsight, my advice to any primary school embarking on a project to implement a learning platform would be to take it slowly! You need one or two enthusiastic and confident people to lead the way. You then need to devote a lot of time and thought to developing a clear strategic vision of how you want your learning platform to work within the context of your school. When the actual process of implementation gets underway, take small steps to see how things work in practise. And at every step of the way reiterate that, while it is hard work and does take time, it will have a positive impact on teaching and learning.”



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