

EXTENDING
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Schools



Extending Learning opportunities

Be inspired when using your
learning platform



A learning platform is an online learning environment, where people use simple tools to extend their learning opportunities.

Learning platforms



WHAT'S INSIDE

This booklet sets out some of the benefits your school could expect from using a learning platform. More important, it demonstrates why all schools should get going and make these benefits a reality.

Be inspired. Visit:



[www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/
extendinglearning](http://www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/extendinglearning)

Introduction

Today, most schools have access to a learning platform. Some are using the technologies well, others are just getting started or have yet to begin.

Whatever stage you are at, there is always more to explore and understand about learning platforms – especially how they can extend learning and teaching.

What is a learning platform?

It's an online learning environment, where people use simple tools to extend their learning opportunities. See it as an online community structured into different zones. Each zone is equipped with different learning and collaboration tools – for learners, staff, school leaders and parents.

It's all secure – everyone has to be a member to enter any of these zones. Membership to relevant zones is by invitation and comes with a password.

Achieving **success**

Making a success of your learning platform starts with commitment from senior management and includes the whole school community. Teachers, students, parents and governors all have an important role.

Recent research by the Institute of Education has found several factors that have helped schools to make a success of their learning platform.

Success factors:

- The headteacher and senior management are committed to taking learning platforms forward.
- Staff have visited other schools to explore what has been successful elsewhere.
- Effective use of learning platforms is at the centre of school development planning.
- The whole school is involved – including all staff, parents, governors and students.
- There is a gradual planned change process that supports the school's needs.
- Time and budget have been put aside to train staff.





I can find out all the information I need and find out where she's at in her learning. We can go on there and just look at the pictures and it jogs her memory.

**Amanda, parent,
Horndean Infant School**

We used the learning platform to inform everybody about what we were going to do so everybody knew about it. By putting the pictures up everybody could feel involved.

**Adil, pupil,
Halifax High School**

Four of us senior managers brainstormed, using mind-mapping software, who would want to use our platform and what would they want to use it for? And that gave us a plan that we could then take out to the rest of the staff.

**Anne Tyler, Headteacher,
New Invention Junior School**

We've got access to the school site under our own secure password so governors can see everything that's going on in the school, even though they don't necessarily have day-to-day contact.

**Malcolm Carling,
Chair of Governors,
Lingfield Primary School**



IDEAS TO GET YOU GOING

The use of learning platforms can make a difference to your school in the four key areas of learning, teaching, management and beyond the classroom.

In the next few pages, you can read about schools that are already enjoying success with their learning platforms in these four areas.



SUCCESS STORIES

Assisting management

School management and organisation can be enhanced through tools like the virtual staffroom. A learning platform provides increased opportunities for staff to collaborate and have online discussions, share ideas and get more involved in developments.

Improving attendance and behaviour management

Springhill High School uses its learning platform to gradually reintroduce excluded students to lessons and homework before they physically return to school. They can log on at the community centre, or at home, and do the same work as others in the classroom. Teachers can see the work they've saved.

Parents can see their child's work and know they aren't missing their education.

"Nowadays, we do almost no exclusion in the school building. The exclusion is now down at the community centre and they're supported and still doing their school work."

John Buchanan,
Deputy Headteacher



Bringing in external expertise

Myton School invited a local poet, Pat, into the school to talk to the students about how to write a good poem. They videoed this and put it up on the learning platform so other students could share the experience. From that, they started a 'Write your own poetry' blog. Students across the school can read poems online, add comments or post brand new poems. Pat can also log in from home and offer guidance on how they can improve their poetry.

"I like publishing my poems because it's not just your English teacher looking at it, it's everybody and you can see what you can improve. If you can see other people's work then you can think, 'Oh, that's a good idea, I might put that into my next poem.'"

Esme, pupil

Supporting leadership and the management of staff teams

Regular visits to their virtual staffroom are now essential for staff at Lingfield Primary School. It's a secure area of the learning platform where teachers can check their school calendar. They store and share resources and information about courses they've been on. It's a place they can access any time, anywhere.

One of the advantages of having an online file store is accountability. For example, the literacy subject leader can look at planning and assessment data across the school. And everybody has access to the materials they need, when they need them.

"There were some staff at first that did feel a little less confident about taking this forward, so we identified those and targeted support for them."

**Darren Gamble,
Deputy Headteacher**



Enhancing Learning

A learning platform can enhance learning by extending opportunities for pupils to work independently and together. It enables self and peer assessment and gives access, anywhere, any time, to resources for consolidation and revision activities.



SUCCESS STORIES

Supporting independent and personalised learning

Students at Monkseaton High School can use their learning platform to study for exam years early. The maths area of their learning platform is split into weeks with all the resources online. Gifted pupils can work ahead of their peers and contact the teacher about anything they don't understand.

"The learning platform allowed me to personalise how I learnt and I could pick and choose when I did the work, as long as I made the deadlines."

Andrew, former pupil





Empowering students as learners

Notre Dame Catholic High School's learning platform has revolutionised its teaching and learning in modern foreign languages. For instance, the French teacher records pupils' presentations onto the learning platform. Students hear the correct pronunciation then record their own version. The teacher listens and makes more recordings to help the student practise on any problems.

Students can pause, rewind and listen as many times as they want until they get it right. Although it's personalised, it doesn't take long to do and frees three hours of class contact time per week for teaching.

"It's more personalised learning because it's the teacher and the pupil together, not really but virtually."

Christine Bodin, French teacher

Raising student confidence and motivation, and cultivating aspirations

New Invention Junior School has a 'Homework Help' discussion forum on its learning platform. Children use this to ask each other questions if they get stuck on their homework.

It's a peer tutoring tool, so children take sole responsibility for asking and answering each other's questions. 'Homework Help' has increased pupils' confidence to have a go at tasks because they know there's a support mechanism if they're unsure.

"It's a bit like having your friends at home and you can just ask them things and they can help you."

Megan, pupil

Enhancing literacy and language skills

St Anthony's Junior School sets targets for each child at the end of each lesson based on work done. This aims to address any areas that need development.

They set up a collaboration area, or wiki, and children are asked to find a website that helps them achieve their target and then paste that web address into their wiki. Generally, children pick websites that they find motivating or fun and so learn while having fun.

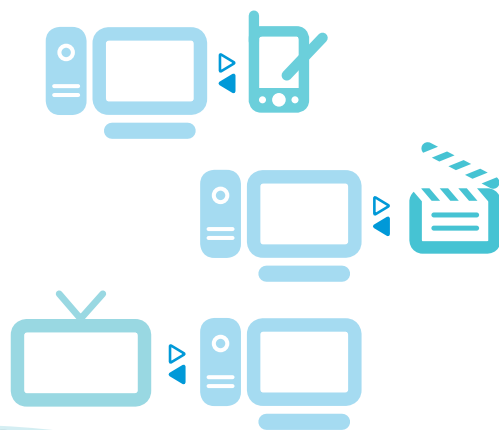
"My literacy target was, 'Don't use said, use different words instead of said'. A website helped me meet my target. Now I'm using words like 'croaked' and 'whispered', it's giving the reader more expression."

Molly, pupil



Supporting teaching

The learning platform supports teachers by extending opportunities for sharing expertise and resources across schools and organisations. Teachers also have access to more up-to-date information when planning, enabling greater personalisation of learning for pupils.



SUCCESS STORIES

Enhancing the quality and relevance of teaching and learning resources

St Anthony's Junior School puts learning videos on the class area of the learning platform to enable pupils to practise skills they have learnt. The children can look at them again at their own pace, in their own time.

To generate a quick recap of the lesson takes about 10 minutes and it can be archived for the teacher to use the next year.

"There are children who don't contribute very often in class but do contribute online. The learning videos recap the main teaching points."
Matthew Bradbury,
Deputy Headteacher



Improving homework for teachers and learners

Broadgreen International School's learning platform allows teachers to assign a lesson with homework attached. Teachers view uploaded work and use the comment box to advise on any improvements. Before pupils upload their homework, they give it a colour code indicating how well they understood it.

This helps future planning. One or two pupils who don't understand a topic can be supported individually. If the whole class gives a lesson a red colour code, the teacher knows they need to go back and review that topic.

"If you've given them feedback, they are likely to resubmit improved work via the learning platform, because they can amend a saved copy."

**Gail Jones, Faculty Leader
Technology and E-learning**

Supporting the development of innovative teaching practices

St Anthony's Junior School linked up with a partner school to create a virtual guide to their region. The teachers taught as if they were secret agents trying to find out information. They set up a 'Spy kids' area on their learning platform so children could communicate safely with each other.

They used Google Earth to locate their partner school and asked each other questions about their local area using the collaboration areas of the learning platform. They did surveys, produced graphs of the answers and used these for maths. They also posted digital photos from local walks.

"We were all enjoying it because you can interact with other people and make new friends."

Declan, pupil

Improving monitoring and assessment of learning

Monkseaton High School students can use a colour-coded self-assessment tool on their learning platform to help gauge what they know before studying a topic. Afterwards, they repeat the assessment to see if they've improved.

Green means they've improved a lot, amber a little, and red means they've stayed the same. Only the student and subject teacher can see the colours. Students can concentrate on ambers and reds and ask the teacher for help on anything. The teacher can also see if anyone needs any support.

"Some students who don't feel confident enough to ask a teacher for help in class can use the self-assessment to say, 'Look, I'm really struggling with this.'"

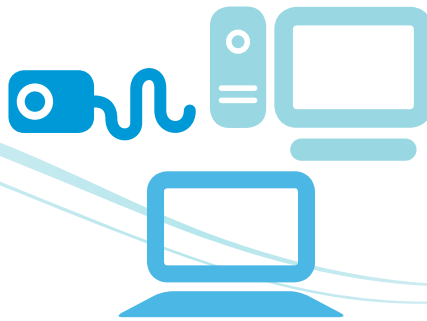
**Simon Thompson,
Deputy Headteacher**



Extending the school

A learning platform opens up opportunities for learning beyond the traditional school building and the school day. Parents can see what their children are doing, the resources available to them and how they are progressing.

Projects across schools can help develop greater understanding of different cultures and localities, leading to increased community cohesion. Pupils unable to attend school for a time can learn from home, making learning easier when they return to school.



SUCCESS STORIES

Family and parental benefits

Lingfield Primary School takes videos, photographs and sound files as evidence of children's progress and achievements from nursery onwards. When parents securely log on to the learning platform class page, their child's portfolio comes up automatically. This is updated regularly so that parents can see how their child is moving forward.

Portfolios started in Foundation Stage will stay with a child throughout school. So, by the time they leave, parents can see the huge progress that the children have made.

"We could see photographic evidence of their work and it was a lovely way to look back at their progress throughout the year."
Gillian, parent



Developing communication and relationships

Halifax High School is too big for all students to come together for assembly. Instead, it uses its learning platform to set the agenda.

When they want students to engage with an issue, they put a questionnaire, video or podcast on the home page. Students can only get to other resources once they've used what's on the home page.

The students see it as a powerful tool and are always keen to post pictures and videos.

"Sometimes the picture of technology is that it's isolating but it's strengthened us as a community."

Rachel Jones, Head of Teaching and Learning

Enhancing links between home learning and school learning

Broadgreen International School uses its learning platform to help students stay up to date with schoolwork when they can't make it into school.

Jessica, a Year 11 pupil, was off school with a broken hip, but could follow lessons and complete homework using the learning platform. If she had a problem, she could message her teachers.

Instead of pupils playing catch-up when they return, the learning platform enables them to carry on as normal.

"The main benefits that we find of having the learning platform is the any time, anywhere learning."

Gail Jones, Faculty Leader

Promoting communication between schools and students

Lingfield Primary School wanted to support their Year 6 students who were moving from a small close-knit community to several large secondary schools. They set up a blog on their learning platform where they asked Year 7 students what their school was really like.

The Year 6s felt more confident that the information they were getting from their peers was more valid than if it had come from teachers or parents. Plus it gave them ready-made friends once they had moved schools.

"We're asking them things like: 'Are the lessons hard and do the teachers get on your nerves?' You'll get a better feeling of what you're going to be doing in secondary school."

Alex, pupil



Next steps

For more about what these and other schools have been doing to get the best out of their learning platform, including video case studies, visit:

 www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/extendinglearning

If you are already inspired and ready to get going, take a look at our free guidance on implementing a learning platform, *Learning platforms: steps to adoption – a step-by-step guide for schools*, which you can download at:

 www.becta.org.uk/schools/learningplatforms

Join in the discussion on extending learning using learning platforms on our collaboration site at:

 <http://collaboration.becta.org.uk/community/personalisedlearning/extendinglearning>





“Changing some people’s mentality is difficult. Some are keen to embrace it and have the time. Other people are keen but don’t have the time. Others don’t want to embrace it at all. It takes time to change the culture. We did it through training, building up confidence and a pilot with Class 9. Once people could see how useful it was they wanted it. Class 9 told their friends and they put pressure on their teachers.”

***Matthew Bradbury, Deputy Headteacher,
St Anthony’s Junior School***



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