



Crossley Heath Language College

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People in Frog schools are changing the way their school works. Leaders, teachers and pupils are all finding new and more effective approaches. Statements from staff in schools indicate that Frog enables this much better than other platforms. Frog users can design and create systems and pages very easily – be this for departmental websites and lessons, communication or admin systems, or areas students develop for each other. We believe that it is the exceptional creative control possible in Frog, through which all can demonstrate their passion and desire to help others, that makes the users of these areas of the school's digital environment much more willing to engage.

This series of 'white papers', produced from conversations between an independent consultant and the schools, explores the way this increased engagement is changing attitudes. An accumulation of relatively small projects is spiraling into major developments. The end result is the overall startling improvements referred to in comments from staff at all levels.

Embedding Frog into daily life at Crossley Heath

Apart from the ICT Network Manager, the School has no other dedicated staff for running and developing their Frog system. It has, therefore, been essential to engage all members of the school community in its development and usage. Initially, creating and building department areas containing useful resources for student learning was the key priority. In order to achieve this, training, support and guidance was given to key personnel within departments. The drive to design and continuously develop use of their Frog remains a key priority in addressing student's personalised learning needs and ever-increasing the quality of teaching and learning. The drive to use the VLE to enhance provision for parents, governors and the wider community is also a key priority for the School. This has involved positive support from the Head Teacher and Leadership Group plus continuing work by champions of the Frog concept to encourage staff to use and constantly develop it.

The school reached a point where students could access teaching and learning resources but felt that success was limited by the degree of true student engagement with the Frog. It seemed a valuable opportunity was being missed for student involvement. Starting with the "Student Room" staff began to harness the enthusiasm and creativity of students in shaping the nature of their own E learning. The school council had already independently set up an Internet presence using My Space, as the opportunity had not been available for them within school. It clearly made sense to offer at least as much opportunity for such communication and interaction within school.

Having listening to the students, it was agreed that the student pages on Frog should be increasingly student-driven, managed, developed and maintained with guidance from staff. It was also agreed that this aspect of the virtual environment should be



significantly expanded. Staff put together a team of students who could not only provide advice on design but could help design and build the new system. Staff identified responsibilities that included editors, developers, graphic designers, promoters and reporters and advertised for students to apply. Students, representing different year groups, applied, were interviewed and given positions. There is now a very active group of students developing the school's Frog in ways which strongly appeal to other students.

History Department personalise students' work; students engage

The History department, led by Helen Hill, have made full use of Frog's 'Teacher Assigned Work' and email system. Work from students is collected on-line and prompt feedback is provided, in order for students to evaluate their progress. Teachers point out the good points, what was wrong, where they need to improve and what they need to do next to improve their grades.

Helen is now able to monitor each of her groups and can see very easily who is logging on and to what resources they need to be guided. Those who are not making good progress can be given close attention between lessons. It has become easier to differentiate work within each class and to personalise each student's activities to meet their specific needs. When deadlines are set students can clearly see by when they have to produce their assignments.

One example of how Frog was used effectively is a Second World War project. Students posted comments on-line regarding questions asked and their comments were marked on-line. When one of Helen's students hadn't sent his work in on time she was instantly able to email him and find out why. She was able, through online communication, to sort facilitate greater understanding of the task set, enabling him to complete his work.

Helen uses Frog to create mini-libraries, setting up very colourful resources that are easily accessible and far more attractive to engage students. The History department have now set up all their teaching units in Frog so students now use and see Frog as the 'norm'. There is now a raised expectation of being able to see what has been covered and also, as Helen says, "see what is coming next," so that increasing numbers of students are preparing in advance for the next unit – rather than starting from cold.

Stemming from this use of Frog in history, students have used Frog for a range of on-line surveys which they enjoy completing as part of their student voice activities. This provides a useful guide to students' attitudes to new and on-going initiatives.

Students use Design and Technology (D&T) resources to become independent learners

Led by Jim Ovenden, the D&T department use Frog daily to continuously add, refer to and update resources and exemplar materials. Students are encouraged to log-in to Frog in order to access worksheets and resources. Students are tracked to see who has logged into specific resources and how long has been spent on each area, enabling staff to refine what is provided. Students are finding they have a greater overview of the course and have a greater insight into what is expected of them and what they need to do during each term.



Like many departments, its sections on the Frog are organized into coursework by year group and annual projects. Lots of helpful resources are available. Relevant clip art is put up, especially for the more specialized machinery where it would otherwise be hard for students to find appropriate graphics. The use of podcasts has been refined to support project work and maintain motivation. Some of the podcasts are student led to promote evaluation and discussion, others by teachers to reinforce learning from home.

Additionally the D&T area in Frog provides access to exemplar coursework from past students which helps fuel creativity. This has been very popular with students who are unsure about what they need to achieve. The department also uses Frog to promote student success in external competitions and to publicise shows and other relevant events in the area. The project pages have online quizzes designed specifically to support the learning in each project and these have proved to be very popular.

Through this students are being encouraged to become independent learners and take greater responsibility for their own learning. Resources are being developed to suit students' needs and staff have created a bank of podcasts for students to download and refer to as a means of creating greater understanding of course work. Students can keep replaying video podcasts, slowing down when necessary. They can work at their own pace in lessons and in their own time at home, to enhance their understanding

A programme for staff and students to create a bank of model lessons, with PowerPoint slides and video clips, is planned for the future to promote students' visual learning. Although it is difficult to confirm whether the increased amount of work produced together with improved grades achieved by the current Year 10 students can be credited directly to Frog, staff at the school are convinced that students have benefited greatly from logging in to Frog daily, accessing their resources from home and having coursework returned to them promptly with comments as to where mistakes have been made and how to improve their work. The on-line surveys and discussions with groups have shown that students have respect towards staff and each other and a very positive and enthusiastic attitude exists around the school.

Students' find use of Frog engaging and helpful in many ways

The students interviewed all agreed that accessing Frog had become the 'norm' and they liked its availability during lessons and at home. Through their 'student voice' activities they have created an on-line magazine called 'Echo', which has very quickly become a showcase for news, features, stories, and poetry. Interviews with visitors such as the Mayor of Calderdale, the Head teacher and other staff and students, have created much interest across the rest of the school.

The magazine has been run as a business enterprise with students applying for and being appointed to posts of manager, reporters and editors. They are carrying out roles focussed on their area of interest suited to their skills. One of the most popular features of the 'Echo' has been the problem page, 'Agony Aunt', column. Students pose problems to which editors provide the answers. Other students are encouraged to post their views and respond to other students' posts and the feature is truly interactive.



Students James and Hannah (Year 7) were very appreciative of the relationships they have developed through the Frog discussion forums. They found that being new to the School the forums made it easy to link up and make friends with other students with similar interests. They also appreciate the accessibility of staff and the way staff respond promptly to their questions regarding coursework. They value the way they are able to use the D&T resources to access podcasts of how to design pieces of work. They can keep referring back to the podcasts until they understand what to do.

Sixth form students Bilal, Ovais and Junaid have found life easier since they started to use Frog. They can locate specific past papers for their 'A' level revision, are able to access resources whenever they want to and receive immediate feedback to work done, either from school or home. Frog has removed the need for them to use memory sticks or floppy discs to move work between home and school. During their GCSE years, prior to Frog being introduced, they had to rely on the availability of paper copies of past papers and there was up to a weeks' delay during which work was handed in, marked and feedback received.

An Art e-Gallery provides an audience for students' work

As Art is a visual subject the Frog platform provides enormous scope for exemplar work to be accessed by others. Each year group has its own Art curriculum page in Frog. This allows them to access key materials to further extend their creative skills, knowledge and understanding. Through an 'Extended Learning and Activities', page students develop practical skills outside the classroom. Additional imagery, links to artists' web pages, games, word searches and crosswords are just some of the content available. Students also have access to teacher video demonstrations that allow them to practise what they see whilst at home.

An E-Gallery provides a space for students to demonstrate work which produced in their own time. This is generally not related to the curriculum but is of high quality and promotes independent learning. Discussion threads allow other people to comment on their work. As with D&T, each Art discipline has linked pages that show exemplar work from past students. Those pages allow the department to extend learning in cross-curricular subjects such as Modern Foreign Languages and Literacy. The pages also have links to Art related clubs that are run during lunchtimes, for example the Photography club. Students upload their images and have the chance to share these with the rest of the group during their lunchtime sessions.

Blogging starts on a visit to Iceland

The idea of blogging was suggested when a group from the school recently visited Iceland. Concerned parents wanted to know whether their children were alright. As Frog offers the facility to post information on-line, staff decided they would use the cameras and camcorders to post daily reports of how the trip was progressing in the form of a 'blog'. This offered opportunities for staff and students in Iceland to relate what they were doing and gave parents the opportunity to read and/or post comments from England.



Once the journey started and staff and students began posting comments about what had been happening each day there were some very interesting comments from parents. These ranged from asking staff to make sure their child had taken their medication, to ensuring they had a good night's sleep, to thanking them for taking such good care of them.

The 'blog' was so successful that staff are already insisting on setting up the similar facilities and another blog for the trip to Australia!

Use of Frog turns a student away from malicious behaviour and opens up opportunities for a student with Asperger's syndrome

Use of ICT, in particular the development of their Frog learning platform, has proved a very positive challenge and has provided an enterprise project for many of the gifted and talented students at Crossley Heath. Staff have found that ICT opportunities lend themselves particularly to the "G&T" cohort as they are less constrained in terms of outcomes.

One example of this is the turnaround in behaviour and attitude of a student who previously tried to maliciously compromise the school network. Instead of punishing the student and restricting access to the school's network, after much discussion between home and school and accurate identification regarding the specific issues, the student was persuaded to use his exceptional ICT talents for the benefit of the School and his classmates. He is now employing his time far more positively managing a Frog-based strategic gaming club for staff and students. He also acts as the school's beta tester for new Frog features that are developed.

A student who suffers from Asperger's syndrome, who was previously unpopular and felt isolated, has found that the school's open approach to ICT has enabled him to focus his talents and energies effectively by building pages in Frog. He would normally have struggled in this main-stream school but through this work, and through assembly presentations of it, his communication skills have also developed.



Online interactions become central to the English department

Sue Parsons and the other teachers in the English department have established a range of interactive activities online for students, such as crosswords. These activities are English related but mainly intended to encourage students into the English area, while supporting their learning at the same time.

Revision forums have been set up, are accessed from the student page in Frog and link to the English area. These provide students with the opportunity to ask, answer and discuss exam related queries with an English teacher. It particularly provides support during study leave when they would otherwise be on their own at home. Parents are invited to use this facility and can post any queries that they have. All students have access to their year's forum and can see what other students are asking.

For English teaching staff, there is a live tracking area for Years 10 and 11, using conditional formatting to give a traffic light system to highlight potential underachievement. In this area there are also progression plans that staff upload and store centrally, for all students in danger of not making a 2 level improvement at KS3. The school as a whole is working towards storing all department handbooks, schemes, department SEF, mid/long term plans here, in order to develop a paperless department in the future.

There is also a dedicated area for sixth form students, where they can leave work and where teachers can annotate and comment on their coursework drafts. It provides students with a secure space for the evaluation and development of their work. There is a discussion forum alongside this to support coursework.

The teachers find that Frog makes their work much easier when doing paired planning of work, managing data with shared classes, working on the department SEF, and in many other ways. The efficiency and centralized approach of the departmental organisation and delivery continues to improve. It means that staff can work effectively anytime, anywhere, alongside a growing structure of content. There is a real growing sense of common purpose in making the resources available and rewarding that impacts on students and staff alike.

The impact of students using discussion forums and feedback from staff through Frog

One example of how staff at Crossley Heath work collaboratively can be seen in the way they have set up assignments in English. The staff had decided to use the idea of 'Poetic Instruments' as the basis for several lessons and a follow-up homework. This was given as an assignment with an experimental 'help' forum set up to run alongside, as a support for students.

Having logged into the system at around 8pm Sue Parsons was really surprised to see the post from a very quiet student who spoke English as a second language and struggled with English as a subject. In the messages below, Mrs Parsons responds to his post by providing an answer that compliments and encourages, whilst also trying to provide him with some helpful suggestions.



What then follows is a response from another teacher from the English department, Mrs Johnson, who similarly encourages him whilst also providing some helpful suggestions to how he answers the assignment set.

The student then replies at 8.47 thanking both teachers for their help. The support given at that time provided a real boost for the student who became increasingly confident in class and on-line. Almost certainly as a direct result of that on-line support and the on-line relationship developed, he started to ask questions in class thus improving his written and spoken language. What perhaps is more important is the way staff have used the opportunity that their Frog offers to begin to extend and break down the traditional school barriers (alongside helping the student with homework). The following shows the actual conversation between the student, Mrs Parsons and Mrs Johnson:

Student
19-05-2008 07:14 PM

Poetic Instruments:

Miss I was just thinking then and I realised i wasn't too sure on a lot of instruments poets. I know some like enjambment, rhyming couplets, metaphors etc but are there any which you could tell me which would really impress the examiner or any I should definitely know?

S. Parsons
19-05-2008 08:25 PM

Gosh, that's quite a broad question at this stage of the game. Let me see if I can help. I think you mean their poetic techniques rather than instruments. Yes, enjambment certainly adds meaning to many poems, but a successful response is about more than feature spotting; you need to be able to discuss the technique in terms of what it adds to the poem, its effect on the reader and the overall meaning of the poem. And it also depends on the question you get tomorrow. But generally, examiners would expect you to be able to provide sustained comment on use of enjambment, use of the sonnet form, rhyme, half-rhyme, rhythm, phonological features such as assonance, consonance, sibilance, alliteration, to name a few. I hope this helps.

Mrs P.

V. Johnson
19-05-2008 08:38 PM

It's always good to look at how the poets use imagery - personification, metaphor, similes and animorphism (making something sound like an animal). When I marked poems from different cultures a few years ago, I remember the exam board saying that we could award marks for interesting and perceptive comments about the poet's technique provided that they were not madly off the wall (or something to that effect) and as long as the students backed up their ideas. Personally, I was impressed if students could comment on minor things like an effective full stop to signify the end of something (ie more than just the end of the sentence) or if the poem began with a key



word that set the tone etc, provided that the student could make a relevant point about it.

Student
19-05-2008 08:47 PM

Thank you, both replies have helped me :)"

An online reading group involves parents in the school's Frog, and students

Many parents said there simply wasn't the time to join a regular reading group but also told staff how they love to read. An online reading group seemed like a good solution and the Frog learning platform gives the school the facility to offer this. A selection of books is proposed each month by a different department in school, which also encourages Literacy across the curriculum. Parents then vote online and a book is selected. The parents share thoughts on the book that they vote to read each month. Sixth formers manage the area and coordinate the books.

Following interest from both Campus Calderdale and the Local Authority Literacy Consultants the school is looking at ways of extending this project to wider audiences within the community.

Crossley Heath also has a podcasting area which is for students to talk about the books that they are reading, and share their ideas with other pupils internationally. There are also links with schools in Europe who subscribe to the school-created podcasts. Students in these schools are able to log onto Frog and publish their own. Sixth form students are taught how to create podcasts and are then given the responsibility to manage the podcasting area.

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