



Halifax High School

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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.

Rapid embedding of Frog changes daily life at Halifax High.

Frog was introduced to the staff only a year ago, in September 2007, as part of a well planned drip-feed approach supported by the Headteacher.

The initial concentration was on easy things that can be done with Frog. These included:

- How colleagues could use Frog to e-mail each other.
- How teachers could easily send an email to their class(es) for information, updates, events, reminders etc., as well as using the e-mail system to send to different groups in a class to differentiate classwork and homework and to make comments regarding how to improve work personalised.
- How to individual students can be e-mailed through the Frog system, with emails recorded by the system, to ensure any suggestion of improper teacher-pupil communication can be refuted.
- Accessing the school calendar.
- Using Frog to post, add comments to and access past and present bulletins.
- Accessing the school timetable in school or from home.
- Accessing the school network (ie. their 'w' drive) through Frog – from school and home - to locate, retrieve and work on their own and students' files.
- Using Frog to check on staff absentees and cover, rather than having to walk across the school to the staff room.
- Using Frog to check the student isolation list.
- Booking resources on-line through Frog.
- And for those teaching in computer rooms, gaining total control of the internet access during lessons of individual students, and of class white lists and black lists.



The impact of these was to make numerous administrative aspects of teachers' jobs easier, saving considerable time and effort and providing more effective ways of working. This led rapidly to widespread and regular use of Frog. All staff are using some of these approaches, the majority are using most of these facilities, with some staff using all of them.

Those leading this development feel using Frog had made a significant positive difference to the way teachers and students operate at a day to day level.

The Learning Lounge; developing teacher CPD.

The school decided to provide support and training so that everyone could see the potential Frog has to enhance teaching and learning whatever their own starting points were. A major development in this has been 'The Learning Lounge'. This was set up specifically to include a range of training, support and guidance for staff, across the curriculum. It now hosts a full range of extended practice-based studies for the different aspects of teaching and learning the school is developing. This supports the NQTs in the school, and the school's focus on assessment for learning and language fluency.

There is a plan, for the immediate future, to build on existing video resources to include video of teachers demonstrating how to deliver 'starter' concepts and plenaries within each subject – some lesson recordings are already uploaded. The aim is to help colleagues to recognise good practice that they can emulate and improve upon.

Driving adoption; high profile 'events' using Frog.

Part of the plan to introduce Frog across the school has been a carefully designed programme of events to keep use of Frog as high profile as possible throughout the year. Events have included:

- 'Paper-free' weeks, with email highlighted as the key means of communicating staff to staff, staff to students, students to staff and students to students.
- Giving staff certificates/awards (particularly for beginners) for progress made during INSET.
- Subject departments being celebrated and praised for developing their own web-sites in Frog.

Success can be measured by the way the staff and students have collaborated over these projects, materials being shared by staff and students, when in school and at home. All subject areas have developed their own department websites, constantly updating, adding and personalising pages as well as increasing the resources available to staff and students.



Geography leads the way; others challenge!

The Geography department have created video clips of Powerpoint 'slide summaries', of topics covered. They have also set up plans and resources for each year so that students can access and remind themselves of what they need to do, at school or remotely from home.

Having led the way in pioneering subject department websites containing banks of resources for teachers and students to access and use, Geography have had to work hard to keep up. As a direct consequence of Geography modelling a 'good' website, other subject departments have created bigger and better sites – to the extent that Geography have already felt it necessary to make two major changes to their own departmental web-site! Each department has constantly updated and altered how their web-sites have looked, tailoring them to meet the curriculum needs of their students in the way they feel works best. The Mathematics department have specialised in videos and puzzle pages, whilst the D&T department are using their departmental website to upload 'recipes'.

Each school House has its own web-site, updated by House Captains, with information such as notices, items on what's happening, and events – including photos and messages of congratulation - making all students aware of activities taking place in and out of school.

'Big Brother' approach increases language skills.

Within 12 months the use of 'Frog' has become embedded into everyday life with staff, and increasingly students, logging into Frog every morning for administrative tasks and information, making life significantly easier all round.

A clear sign of how successful the project has been is the raised expectancy in what people want Frog to do. For example, students interviewed as part of developing ideas for 'student voice' and wanting to find out what other students feel about aspects of school, discussed whether they could use the idea of Channel 4's Big Brother. They wanted to create videos of interviews with their classmates, and upload the edited video into the Frog for everyone to be able to share and comment on, both in school and at home.

Staff paid for a 'Big Brother' diary room chair and students were invited into the diary room to speak about what they liked about school and suggestions as to how it could be improved. This fits well with the school's desire to encourage their students to think more carefully about their English Language and to provide more opportunities to talk to a range of different audiences.



Online course support ensures understanding and completion

Supporting coursework in a range of ways gives pupils what they need to properly understand what is required, to obtain guidance, and to submit their work on time.

In some areas of the school schemes of work, for exam and course work have been put online, so that in every year group students can see what is to be covered. Included in the resources provided are sets of videos of 'lessons' that contain minute-long PowerPoints of 3 or 4 bullet-pointed slides summarising the lesson(s), learning objectives, what was covered and the anticipated outcomes. Students report that playing the video after the lesson is a much easier way to learn than reading a worksheet. Knowing the topics coming up they can be better prepared when attending lessons. For students who are absent this is even more important, as they can work from home and avoid missing parts of the course.

Students are providing staff with feedback about resources and find it much easier to contact staff without chasing them round school and trying to ask questions when staff have other students to teach. From emails received, teachers are better able to plan how to personalise work assigned to students, as they know where students are struggling.

Students on work placement in Year 10 were given coursework prior to going out of school. Whereas in previous years if they got stuck after a short time they then had to wait until they returned to school to ask, this year they were able to email teachers and get an instant response, with advice on what they do not understand and on what to do next.

Year 11 students are now almost constantly using Frog and its VLE systems remotely, to email teachers on a range of school related and course work issues. These can very often be quickly and easily addressed, building the relationship and respect between teachers and students to one of trust and belief in each other.

Staff find emails are often the start of a conversation leading to students developing a greater understanding of their coursework – particularly with shy, quiet or absent students. One student who was borderline between grade C and D was very quiet in class and always reluctant to ask questions. She did not want to appear as if she was 'working' in front of her peers and did not attend extra support lessons at lunchtime. Out of the blue she emailed her teacher a question about her work. From the response began a dialogue between teacher and student which increased the student's confidence and self-esteem, as well as her knowledge and understanding in each of the concepts covered. In the first mock exam the student had written little in each of her answers. In the mock exam just prior to the GCSE exam her answers were longer, written with greater confidence and showed a much greater understanding of topics.



Students build an enterprise business with Frog.

Staff and students at Halifax High quickly realised that their Frog gave them the ability to create leading-edge online environments, and that the students could develop enterprise activity around this. Doing this would offer the students experience that would be extremely valuable to them beyond school. For the school it offered to strongly enhance their relationships with partner schools and businesses in their local community – by offering them tailor made web-sites that are attractive, informative, up to date and inter-active.

Created as a year 9 gifted and talented project, the enterprise scheme has been carefully planned and organised from the outset to operate as a commercial business. The scheme is being modelled around the highly successful existing scheme that offers to set up web-sites for departments in the school and for the feeder primary schools. After initial training and support the scheme has been set up to be a self-financing business that, it will provide valuable experience of working in the world beyond school. The project has developed through using Frog into a thriving business. One of the sponsors was so impressed with the students' work that they doubled their sponsorship from £1000 - £2000 in return for the students creating, maintaining and updating a web-site for them!

All the posts in the business, ranging from designers to reporters, were advertised with a job and person specification. Students had to apply for posts they wanted, setting out their CV and reasons for wanting to take on that particular responsibility. Interviews were held and students appointed to each role. Posts were offered to students who had presented and written their letters of application to meet the person specification and who interviewed best.

Student Frog Wardens make the online world safe and enjoyable.

Students in Halifax High are very keen to use their Frog. The phrase "I'll VLE it to you" is now heard in the school, indicating a deep grasp of the communication and collaboration possibilities Frog has brought. But online environments also potentially bring problems for young people, even within the closed and protected Frog environment in a school. Young people need to learn about online dangers and how to deal with them – and what better way than to have older and wiser students helping younger colleagues to do this?

Zare, Nosheen and Anisa are three of the group of sixteen 'Frog Wardens', practically demonstrating the school's philosophy to actively involve students in the every day life of the school. Each of the students applied for their Frog Warden positions; positions they have since had a major role in developing - to help all students be safe online and to be able to easily report problems such as online (or indeed offline) bullying, or upsetting emails or messages. All the Frog Wardens have visibly and very effectively 'bought into' what the school is trying to achieve. Their role includes feeding back to staff on successes, failures, concerns and general issues arising from the day to day and out of school use of Frog.



Frog Wardens have all participated in 2 days CEOPs training, to help them be aware of and recognise issues such as bullying, abuse, racism, conflict resolution, and to receive guidance on what to do. Frog Wardens then work with other students to make them aware of the issues and to provide guidance on what to do and what action to take if they encounter something distressing online.

Students now really look forward to receiving safe emails from their friends, as well as from teachers regarding their work, and the school's Frog is becoming a social environment. The school has created Our Tube (based on You Tube) where video clips are posted onto Frog for students to watch at school or share with family and friends at home. These include things such as student performances. Pupils also enjoy seeing whether subject departments have changed their departmental websites.

The Frog Wardens have a number of roles that were originally set up by staff, but that are now also determined by the Frog Wardens themselves. These include roles such as:

- Monitoring forums and liaising between staff and students when anything inappropriate appears.
- Suggesting to staff ideas for further development of the online systems.
- Creating video and powerpoint slides to be uploaded onto the VLE.
- Presenting assemblies to the rest of the school.

Frog Wardens really enjoy helping shape the changes in the way teachers and students use Frog, make the lives of all easier in sharing information, communicating with each other and making school and learning far more interesting than it ever used to be.

Each of the pairs of students interviewed commented on how Frog is making their school a really good place to be, how much more interesting each of their subjects has become and how they now enjoy coming to school far more than they used to. Zara said: "Using Frog makes communicating with each other so much easier and makes our school a happier place to be in!"

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