



Honywood Community Science School

Contact details: <http://www.honywoodschool.com>

Email: HCordy@honywood.essex.sch.uk

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 Honwood

Frog is embedded into daily life at Honwood Community Science School. Honwood initially used Frog to improve on their previous Virtual Learning Environment. They are now gaining the benefits from a system that has a wide range of facilities to offer schools, staff and students. They are able to respond to requests to add, alter and/or improve specific elements of the system. According to technician manager, Chris de Vries, Senior Management have been instrumental and the driving force in altering mind sets and encouraging teachers to embed the use of Frog into their every day teaching and departmental websites. This has enabled students to delight in using Frog in many different ways. The initiatives themselves are not 'rocket science', but the extremely engaging nature of Frog, with visually stimulating design and interactions staff can individually setup, has helped enormously.

The school is continually building on the wide range of administrative tasks now being performed by Frog which staff have found extremely useful. Staff within each of the departments at Honwood are beginning to recognise the potential Frog has to manipulate the on-line environments and facilities developed by Frog to enhance every area of the curriculum. The Science department led the way with some initial web-sites that other departments have used as the model to develop their own.

Yr10 – Yr 6 Linking.

As a pilot project, pupils at one of the primary schools feeding Honwood have been able to allay their fears of moving to secondary school, through discussion online with yr 10 students. Year 6 children at the feeder primary schools have been allocated a portal within the secondary school's Frog, linked to Year 10 students, and the primary pupils



were encouraged to post questions to allay fears of them starting at Honywood. For example, in one conversation, a yr 6 girl fearful of bullying was guided by two yr 10 girls. Acknowledging that bullying does happen, the forum conversation included telling their younger colleague what they would do if targeted by bullies. The project was such a success that it will be extended to more of their feeder schools this year.

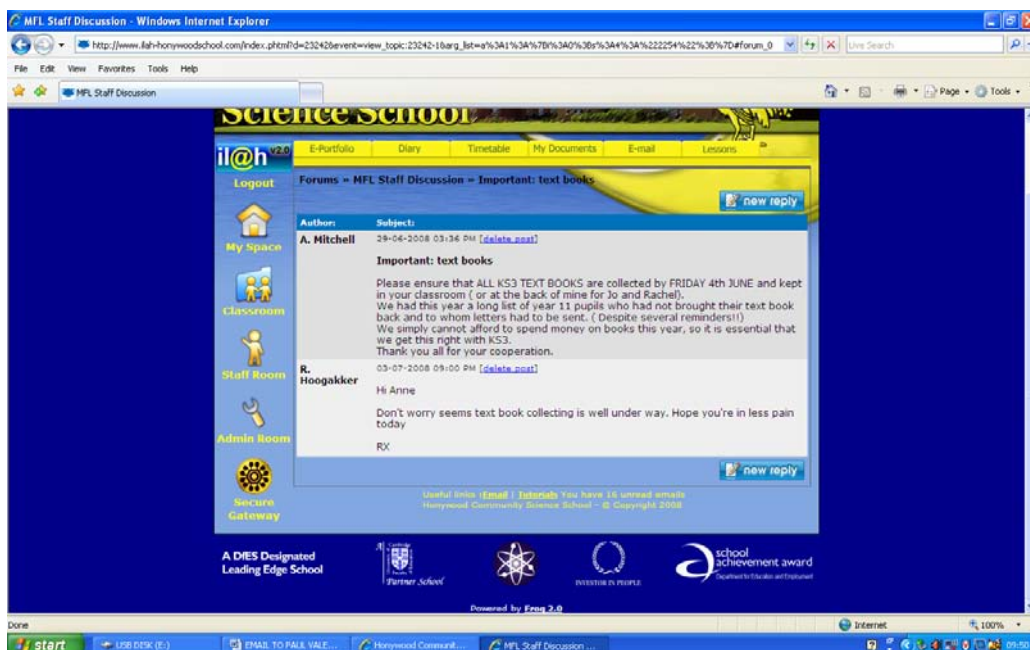
An inclusive staff-room.

Staff in the MFL department, previously upset by not having been around when social activities were discussed, were very pleased to instead be able to discuss this online. The suggestion was distributed through email where every member of the department's staff stated preferred times, dates and venues. A decision was made having consulted everyone.

This is just one example of the ways that administrative tasks have become significantly easier, as staff have adopted online communication. Other departments, seeing the impact in MFL, are now making similar changes.

Family-work balance for teachers.

The Head of Modern Foreign Languages, discovering on a Sunday that she could not be in school the following day, was able to send an important message to colleagues – and was re-assured by one of the teachers in her department letting her know the task was well in hand. Of course this would not have happened without the staff having become used to dropping each other quick emails.





Personal service from teachers online.

It is very helpful for pupils to have online revision help. But when this includes personal responses from teachers, answering questions asked by students, revision becomes rewarding.

The Humanities department used Frog in this way to help with revision in History and Geography. It was also made possible for all students logged on to see their own and others' questions answered, with the interest of seeing what their peers were asking having the effect of getting all the students to log on.

Teachers able to play-act.

The History department used Frog to set up a forum that one of the teachers entered in the character of a World War I soldier serving in the trenches. Students had to post comments on what life was like during the war and living in the trenches. They were then asked to write and submit on-line an assignment based on responses from the forum. The number of responses into the website showed how all the students had posted comments, and had read previous responses carefully before posting their own question.

Students are now also able to see schemes of work, plans of lessons, resources used by teachers and use information as part of assignments set.

Team teaching made possible.

The two part-time MFL teachers who are not in school at the same time, find the email and notice board system invaluable. They are now able to share what has been covered (or not) in lessons, notes from meetings held and general issues arising.

The realities of foreign-exchange trips

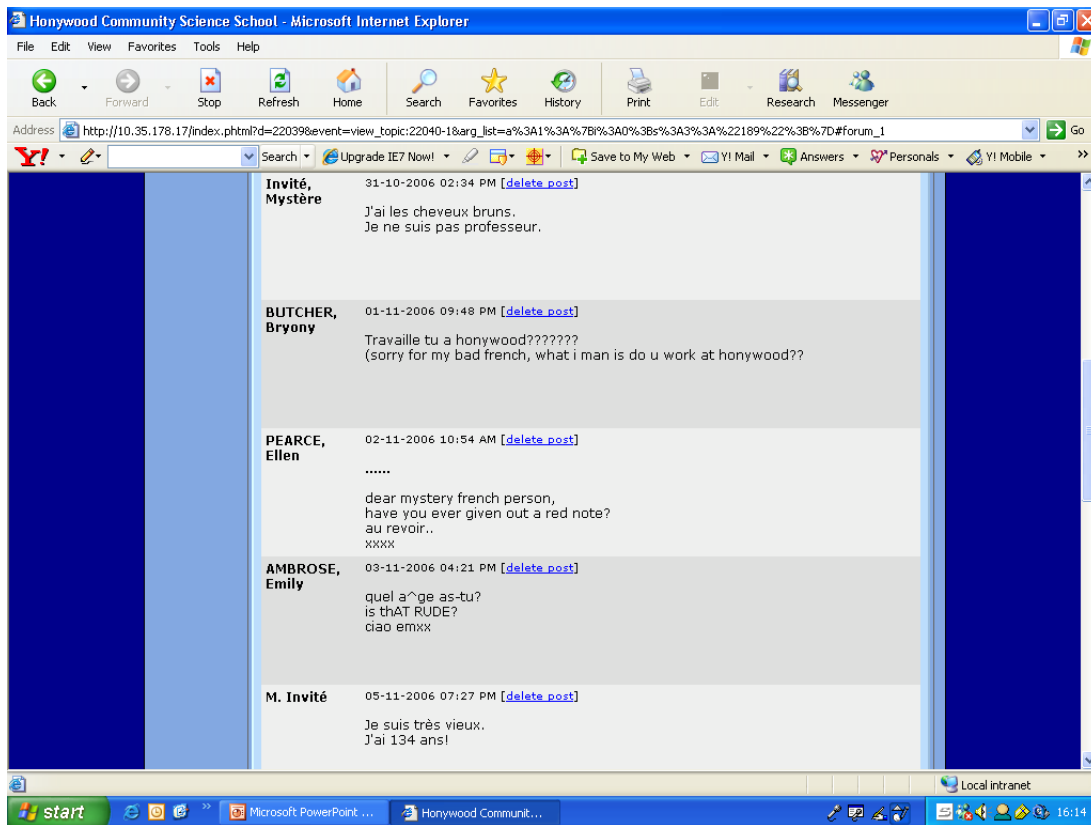
One of the forums set up by the MFL department was when the students were preparing for exchanges to different countries. Year 10 students, who had already been on foreign exchange, were asked by younger students about a range of topics from what to take to what the town was like.

A wide range of guidance was offered, that the students would not have been able to gain otherwise.



Mystery guests in French and German.

Teachers from the MFL department entered forums as a celebrity from the French and German past. The students had to guess their identity, having been provided initially with only the briefest of details about these celebrities. Students questioned the mystery guest (in French or German) to discover more.



Students find online work engaging and interesting.

Comments from students using the school's Frog include:

- accessing work from home made preparation much easier.
- I was able to work together with two of my friends at home to finish my PowerPoint and practice delivering our presentations with each other, ready to perform in class for school the next day

One of the very quiet and isolated students became more confident and popular in class as a result of personalising and developing his own web-site and then helping other students create their own personalised web-sites.



Two students sent an email saying how they were struggling to remember the Periodic Table. Their teacher sent to all students a link to a Periodic table game, that these students kept on playing, which lead to them remembering all of the symbols in the table. One of the pupils commented that the reason he had got really good marks in the test was because:

“In the test it was like doing playing the game in your head – and I could remember them all!”

This support from the digital environment was particularly important for those on GCSE courses who now only needed to email their work – rather than having to print pages out and/or carry around memory sticks. They could now begin work in school and continue at home, still have access to resources, send drafts in for their teachers to mark, proof-read and respond to. Teachers felt that being able to tell students what to do next in emails was a factor in helping them to improve their grades.

All the students interviewed enjoyed participating in the forums that made lessons come alive after school. One of the most popular forums on the website was set up by of the form tutors and had some almost 5000 posts!

Using Frog to impact beyond the boundaries of the school.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Bebo appeal strongly to students, to download and share photos, multi-media and for conversations. As students can access the school's Frog from home, the teachers can provide similar opportunities through their Frog, helping students to look at recent material that can enhance the teaching and learning within their particular subject area.

This wider access to Frog is also used to address a range of other important issues in and around school.

However, the real difference that Frog has made has been to enable teachers to set assignments that allow students to start work in school and continue at home when they feel ready to work (when in school they have felt reluctant to). They can log into Frog, access their own saved work and have the facility to utilise exactly the same resources as used in school. The times recorded by the Frog site show that students often work as well if not better in the confines of their own home than in school during the day, throughout the evening and quite often late at night.



Readiness to engage online; the key to learning.

The readiness of pupils to engage through the school's Frog platform – from home as well as in school - enabled a huge amount of powerful learning to happen when a teacher initiated debate around an incident of graffiti vandalism. James Canton, a teacher of English, used the opportunity to get students to develop their discussion and writing skills. Because the students were very concerned about the way the incident was handled by the school, they engaged very strongly with the discussion. The way that James facilitated the debate online, enabled the students to develop higher order reading and writing skills that far outweighed what could have been achieved through traditional classroom approaches.

James is particularly keen to develop different styles of teaching and learning. He has found using Frog has allowed him to begin to embed the facilities that will hopefully become the norm across the department. James has set up several forums using Frog which have explored a range of strategies to elicit students' views on different subjects whilst also encouraging them to read and respond both synchronously and asynchronously (i.e. live and responding immediately to posts and also having time to think carefully about responding).

He realised that a real incident in school could enable him to extend this work into a topic of major concern to the pupils. A student had been caught and consequently excluded for writing graffiti around the school and 'tagging' his work. Tagging is a fairly recent 'cult' activity grown out of using graffiti to mark gang territory and is often, but not exclusively, associated with deprived areas and issues relating to abuse of drugs and alcohol as well as bullying, racism and homophobia.

Teaching 'e-facilitation' skills

This example demonstrates the power that Frog has to alter attitudes towards learning and school in general. James addressed a real issue that was recent and relevant to all students, yet was introduced using the secure and safe environment that Frog offers. This enabled James to ensure students were taught about 'e-facilitation' and how to use the internet and social networking safely, teaching specific skills such as;

- only writing posts which used correct English,
- using language that reflected a positive and constructive approach ie. students were pleasant and polite to each other,
- being careful not to use language likely to prevent other posters from stating their views,
- going beyond saying 'great answer', as they were also encouraged and felt increasingly confident and comfortable to disagree with what someone else had written, without writing anything likely to upset and/or cause offence

It was necessary to teach students that prior to posting comments they needed to have read and understood what other posters views were (or asked for clarification) and have thought carefully and re-read posts, before posting comments, so that their posts reflected accurately what they wanted to say.



Professional development for teachers

In discussing with James his own comments in the forum, he began to recognise that he, as a teacher, has needed to learn new skills in e-facilitation. He found that he has needed to concentrate on his own professional development to ensure he has set the example both within the English department and as a model across the school. He needed to practice phrasing all his comments carefully so that they were positive, not too short or patronising, and were constructive whilst also being critical and likely to elicit further comments.

As a direct result of developing his own e-facilitation skills James has been able to use Frog to begin to break down the previously existing barriers that often exist in schools, such as allowing teachers/students to communicate with each other personally and/or as a group, and continuing to be available and responsive in the evening, weekends and holidays rather than finishing school at 3pm. By using Frog in this way, allowing students and their parents to have a voice when struggling with work, James is finding that there are significantly improved teacher/student relationships on-line and consequently in school. This has led to greater respect for each other.

As students often use forums during the evening to send messages to each other, the idea of setting up forums specifically for students to express their opinions about subjects in school has become much less threatening. Students are also finding it much easier to express their opinions relating to course work when they are at home and appear to welcome having more time to think before answering questions posed.

How the project developed.

The project began as a result of James introducing asking a class of students what they thought of the student caught and excluded from school as a direct result of drawing graffiti around school. The following discussion showed how emotional the students were about graffiti and what they thought about tagging. Whilst most students said the school would be a better place without graffiti, some students disagreed and others remained silent and seemingly not wanting their opinions to be known.

Prior to using Frog James would have given his students an assignment to be written and handed in for marking. The way his students reacted to the discussion, however, inspired James to plan an project designed to create an environment where he would set up a range of resources for students to read and discuss with each other both in class and on line through a specially designed forum set up using Frog.

James first introduced Banksy as the 'most famous' graffiti artist and showed students some of his work, demonstrating how some of it brightened up environments with both satirical humour and skilled drawings, and were works of art (with one piece of graffiti being sold for £300000!!). He then used Frog to link the class to an article from Leicester CC with pictures showing the range graffiti which littered the city with tagging signatures – coupled with a Times-Online link highlighting another article where Lambeth Council publicly apologised for washing away graffiti drawn by Banksy that they described as art. The final link was to a Guardian-Online page highlighting the work Banksy produced on his visit to Israel where he was commissioned to produce work on

the dividing wall. Alongside each of these links was the facility for people to post comments. The comments displayed arguments both for and against graffiti.



Student tasks within the 'forum' set up

The student tasks involved logging in to read the links set up as resources and responding to the designated forum by posting their comments, having read previous posters' comments. The forum moved what would have been a passive assignment into an interactive debate with all students posting their views and comments – having first been given guidance on 'netiquette' and how to speak to people on-line as well as how to structure their posts, as described above.

There were a huge number of responses that included everyone in the class posting several comments on their own views as well as what they thought about posts from other members of the class. Posts from the weakest to the most able produced more written work than had previously been submitted in prior written English assignments for that group. Work was also of a higher quality and was put down to a range of factors, including students being engaged and interested initially in the subject – and then inspired by the links about Banksy. Those links also had the effect of making the students take a step back, challenging and questioning existing ideas in a format that, being

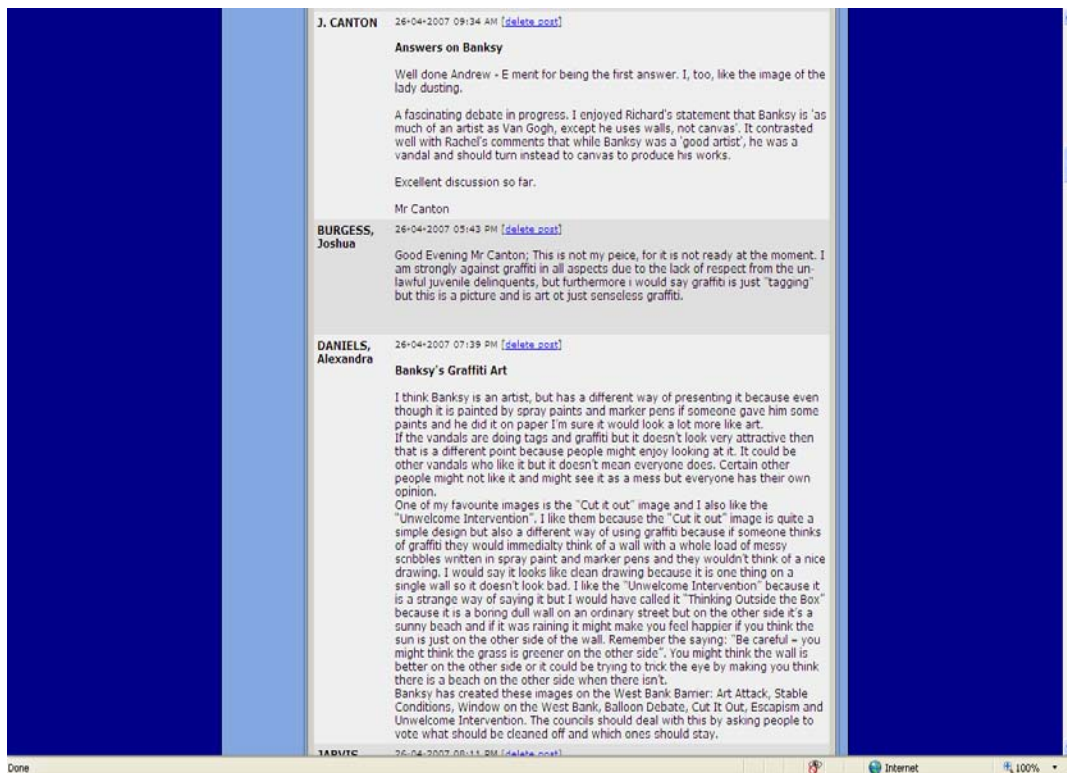


similar to Facebook and similar social networking sites, was a place where they felt they wanted to contribute.

Peer assessment

Whilst the marking of books and recording marks in record books is a tried and tested method of assessing students, James decided that alongside piloting different styles of teaching and learning, he also wanted to trial a range of different evidences for assessing progress made by students. One of the very positive spin-offs to James setting the rules for all the students about reading everyone else's comments before posting their own views, provides clear evidence of peer assessment.

What each student wrote, and the way it was presented before posting along with times and dates, allowed James to see who was working and who wasn't, providing a bank of evidence over time of progress made (or not). At the same time the students were also reading each other's posts which made them want to agree with or (politely) challenge other people's opinions. By getting students to challenge each other's views in a constructive manner, James also had the evidence in the forum of the development of higher order reading and writing skills.



The forum was further enhanced by the teacher's comments, for example to the first student who was one of the weakest in the group, recognising and valuing his post by rewarding him with a merit. Leaving personal comments has led to learning being personalised, and greater self-esteem in students developed by recognising and valuing their posts within the group/class community - which is often very difficult to do



in the classroom – where a positive comment to a teenage student in front of their peers can make them feel silly or embarrassed.

What did the students learn?

The opportunities for finding out what students understood, what their views were, and the developing higher order reading and writing skills that the forum presented far outweighed the traditional paper and pencil assessments and addressed many other important school issues at the same time. Indeed, students also started to learn about e-facilitation, the 'netiquette' rules of being on-line and how to talk to peers and adults appropriately – which some schools see as impossible to police – yet Honywood have used Frog to begin to teach their own students to both help police and self-police this.

In terms of 'continuous' on-line assessment, this approach makes possible a comparison of responses students make at the beginning of the year with current work. This can include taking account of comments about levels of writing, the maturity of response, use of vocabulary etc., as well as the record of what has been said to a student – (on-line so it is recorded in both the teacher's on-line records and the student's). This could show the levels of achievement of students rising and provide the basis for discussions with them of what they would need to do to make their contributions rate a higher level of achievement.

Similarly Frog has helped Honywood to make monitoring more accessible and enable students/teachers to set targets to improve levels achieved in course work set. If a student returns an assignment, comments are then sent back with the teacher's assessment grade, saying for example that at the moment the assignment would achieve a Grade D and suggesting the things needing to be incorporated in order to move to a Grade C.

The students each have their own area to save work into and are taught how to save their work before posting onto forums in an English or Geography or History folders, saving each draft with the date and which attempt (eg. Banksy assignment - 1a - 26.07.08). This in turn provides a bank of evidence showing the progress students have made even.

Honywood is finding that even their most disaffected students are willing to post work and begin to raise their grades by this method. The school is finding that using the on-line environment has become an integral part of how the school operates.

hello@frogtrade.com

FrogTrade Ltd. F Mill, Dean Clough, Halifax, HX3 5AX
T: 01422 250800 F: 01422 354232

Registered in England 3935677 Vat No. 755 718402