



## **Heaton Manor School**

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### **Driving Delegated Management**

#### **Background**

Heaton Manor is a maintained coeducational comprehensive and community school, occupying a pleasant site in a residential area in the East of Newcastle upon Tyne. Heaton Manor caters for a school population of approximately 2000 school pupils aged between 11 and 18 years and over 200 staff.

As a school with a Mathematics and Computing Specialism, and a member of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, we actively encourage new teaching methodologies which harness the vast potential of ICT. Investment in learning technologies reflects our commitment to raising standards throughout the school.

We are able to offer ICT training to staff and students from other schools and have good learning partnerships with our local primary schools.

We also offer a broad range of other curriculum opportunities so that our students are equipped with the skills they need for life in the twenty-first century. We believe in hard work and recognise success in all areas. Most of our students continue into sixth form or further education at 16, taking A levels and vocational courses. Careers guidance is given a high priority at Heaton Manor School, to encourage students to aim high and to fully develop their potential.

#### **The Challenge**

Thorough and extensive research was undertaken by Heaton Manor in order to find the most advanced virtual learning environment. The school required an environment that allowed the students easier and more available access to teaching and learning resources. The school previously had to direct the students through an internal network



which proved a long and confusing route for all users. It was essential the school maintained 24/7 access to learning resources, to increase the ease of accessibility for the students. The digital environment had to be secure, so that both the teachers and students could network safely.

Frog in the first instance satisfied all of the challenges outlined above.

Now five years on the challenge has grown even further. One of the many new objectives is to exploit the latest Web 2.0 technologies made available through the learning platform, the aim of which is to give further ownership of specific areas within the virtual learning environment to Students, Teachers and Support Staff alike. Empowering the Students and Staff in such a way will hopefully boost their confidence in the use of new technologies whilst learning and teaching; and with the sharing of new skills, resources and ideas the wider school community can only benefit from the utilisation of such a platform.

### **The Solution**

The Frog platform provides Heaton Manor with all the tools needed to satisfy the objectives. The advanced permissions model enabled a very granular approach to providing access to specific areas within the virtual learning environment. This permitted individuals or groups of individuals whether Students or Staff to take control over notices boards, blogs, forums etc.

### **Blogs**

An example of the Students being given ownership of a distinct area within the virtual learning environment is one of the Sociology blogs. The blog contains entries from Students of a particular group, commenting on a specific curriculum topic of the week. A forum is then used to discuss the topic in depth allowing the Teacher to facilitate where necessary. Due to the intuitive nature of the platform the Teacher and Students were able to use the blog and forum without any formal training and immediately reaped the benefits; such as increased Student participation and collaborative learning.

### **HMS Debating Society**



Heaton Manor School Debating Society has developed their own website using the Frog platform. The site is accessible via a domain name bought by the Students and includes a forum with over two thousand posts, RSS feeds and much more. The site is administered by individuals within the Society who have been empowered by the functionality of Frog to produce and develop their own online community. This is a prime example of where giving Students creative control of a particular area in the virtual learning environment can provide the catalyst for further growth of the Heaton Manor Online Community as a whole.

### **Year Group Notices**

The Staff have also gained from the use of such technologies in the form of the new 'Year Group Notices' section of the virtual learning environment. Within this section there are interactive Year Group Notice Boards allowing information to be posted by the Year Teams, thus improving communication and reducing the number of emails being sent to every Staff user. Each Year Group Notice Board is accompanied by a resources section where the Year Teams can share resources frequently and easily. The benefits of such an area are two fold. Firstly the information and resources do not have to be e-mailed, therefore saving time and effort; and secondly all relevant information resides in a single location which the Staff can access any time any where.

### **Manor Tube**

Another area of the virtual learning environment which has grown exponentially is the 'Manor Tube' section within the virtual Classroom. This section allows any member of staff to upload video resources and tag them using the content tagging facility in Frog. Tagging each resource facilitates cross curricular sharing of learning and teaching materials through the content search facility available within the virtual learning environment. This facility saves large amounts of time and effort, by re-using materials already developed/researched by members of staff, which in turn develops good professional reputations for individuals and departments within the learning community.

### **Future Plans**



Heaton Manor School is about to release a completely redesigned version of their virtual learning environment which will incorporate some of the latest technologies made available through Frog.

In the future, we will be continuing the development of our virtual Curriculum areas to allow further support of assessment for learning for example through the sharing of learning objectives and goals; building on previous knowledge and understanding and sharing expectations and providing feedback via the learning platform.

We hope to extend the integration of systems within school to further optimise processes to save time and effort and primarily enhance personalised learning to a greater degree.

The virtual learning environment is an integral part of Heaton Manor School and over the past five years it has revolutionised our learning community.