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## Sunbury Manor School

***Once known as a struggling school, Sunbury Manor is now a leading specialist school reaping exceptional benefits from its virtual learning environment. "Students thoroughly enjoy school as shown by their exemplary behaviour, good attendance and very positive attitudes to learning," stated the school's Ofsted report in 2008. The school attributes its highly successful Ofsted inspection to Frog, its state of the art learning platform.***

### Background

Located in Surrey, Sunbury Manor School is a secondary community school catering for 1,056 11-16 year old boys and girls. The school is ranked in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally for progress made by students. As one of the most over-subscribed schools in the county, Sunbury Manor received 562 applications to fill a mere 210 places in the 07/08 academic year.

### The Challenge

Recorded as a 'good' school by Ofsted in 2005, Sunbury Manor was highly motivated to work towards 'outstanding' status. The school believed that the roll out of a flexible and forward thinking virtual learning environment (VLE) would aid school communication and learning in and out of the classroom, so a search commenced for the most suitable provider. Sunbury Manor already owned an internal email system. However the school was very conscious of the extortionate costs of its external provider.

The school required a system that would engage all abilities and age groups. Louise Duncan, head teacher explains: "We wanted to provide the students with a system that allowed for personalised learning and home access. Most importantly we wanted the volume of the student voice to increase substantially. If we could find a platform that allowed for flexibility, school developments and an array of subject areas, we were on our way to achieving our aims."



### The Solution

In January 2006, the school made what was to be a very successful decision to partner with Frog. Senior management felt that the platform was at the absolute forefront of development as Louise explains: "We looked at a range of providers; some of them were highly complex but Frog was just streaks ahead. We immediately took to the simplicity of the solution and the ease to develop our own requirements. We were keen for the platform to mirror the culture and look of the school, and Frog allowed us to do just that!"

Sunbury Manor staged a gradual process of Frog implementation, firstly to the staff. "Teachers absolutely amazed by the possibilities. It was so easy for the staff to use, even for me as a complete technophobe! Our teachers were very excited to share resources and lesson plans and to explore the world of online teaching and learning," reveals Louise.

### The Benefits

Endless benefits have been experienced at Sunbury Manor. A momentous occasion was witnessed at the time of the Ofsted inspection. The inspectors were keen to find out about the school prior to their visit and asked for information to be sent to them. Instead the school was able to offer a unique log in allowing them to view the school's learning platform. As a result of this highly organised arrangement, Ofsted awarded the school with the following comment:

"The virtual learning environment provides excellent opportunities for students and parents to have a voice and raise concerns. New students joining the school in Year 7 are given online access to their mentors, other students who are coming to the school and their progress manager. The online school council is another good example. The school has rightly developed a rigorous policy and safe use of the internet to support this development."

The teaching staff of Sunbury Manor has reaped an array of positives from the implementation of Frog. The ability to share resources and lesson plans has saved them precious time and also allowed them to concentrate on the delivery of their lessons.

Keen to further the school's knowledge of the learning platform, teachers are invited to weekly Frog training sessions. Every Wednesday teachers can attend the training sessions and further their confidence within the Frog system. "Having visited our school twice and been part of the Frog training, Jim Knight MP, minister of state for schools and learners, described the school as 'at the forefront' and 'inspirational'," Louise Duncan elates.



### ***Turning up the volume of student voice***

The students of Sunbury Manor have also witnessed a huge change at the school. First and foremost, the volume of student voice has increased dramatically. Louise Duncan explains: “The children are at the forefront of developments and cultural change of the school. Through our weekly ‘10 second survey’ the students have been able to voice their feelings on school issues. As an online facility, it has empowered our students and reassured them that their feelings are being listened to and that their opinion is valued. We are able to give immediate feedback and let them know that their feelings are noted.”

Louise Duncan continues: “Furthermore, the online school council has allowed for discussion threads to be posted and the students themselves are then invited to comment. Take music teaching as an example; one student expressed that they would like more practical lessons and in a matter of weeks we were able to address this issue and include more practical activities in the music lessons.

“Another remarkable change has been the attitude towards *The Box*. This is an area where disruptive students are placed, rather like detention. Signed in by their parent or carer, the student then works in silence for the duration of the school day. Many of these students used the learning platform as an area to voice their true feelings, one student writing ‘I hate *The Box*.’ A member of the student council then responded, very maturely, explaining that if they were to behave in class and respect the teacher then they would not be summoned to *The Box*. To witness this level of conversation take place and a change in the attitude of many of our students has been an incredible experience. This could only have happened through the online digital environment.”

### ***Welcoming the newcomers***

The Year 6 transition portal has been a great success. Once offered a place at the school the Year 6s are each allocated a log in and details of their Year 9 mentor. Louise Duncan explains: “In the summer of 2008 the soon-to-be Year 7s were able to familiarise themselves with the school and also ‘meet’ the teachers. We were keen for them to feel part of the school and to strike up a relationship with their mentor prior to their induction day. This portal was a great success and in September 2008 when the Year 7s joined us, it was great to see that the children had already made friendships and recognised the teachers from the pictures online.”

### ***School collaboration***

Sunbury Manor has also established an ethnic minority language portal. With a large number of students from an array of ethnic backgrounds, the school was keen to provide an area where students could communicate with other schoolchildren in the area. This portal is available for all age groups and teachers across the authority to encourage friendships and communication.



**Home access** Through the digital environment students can now access their resources in the comfort of their own home. "This has initiated the birth of a new student: one that approaches study in a mature and independent manner. We have witnessed some amazing statistics; on Saturdays average hits are around 500, while Sundays log an average of 600-750 hits," reveals Louise Duncan.

#### Future plans

Sunbury Manor is still to exploit the full potential of Frog. In the immediate future, the school will see the birth of the parent portal. Planned to roll out before Christmas 2008, parents will be able to access information about their child's academic progress and attendance levels. They will also be able to communicate with staff at the click of a button.

A Year 11 transition zone is also high on the agenda. Planned to roll out in May 2009, Year 11s will be able to access the learning platform once they have enrolled at their next step of education. The school is keen to provide the Year 11s with an area that they can use to keep in touch with friends and teachers to reassure each other. Moving to college is a big step and one that can be quite daunting. Louise Duncan admits: "Drop out rates are very high in this area, so we want to do everything in our power to ease the Year 11s into a successful college experience."

The school also has further plans to collaborate with the primary school community. The establishment is keen to share its resources and extend the learning capabilities of the Surrey based primary schools.