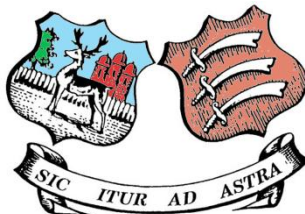




The Hertfordshire & Essex High School

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In just a few short months since the Herts & Essex implemented the FROG VLE, the school has seen significant growth in the amount of students and teachers accessing the site and using the system. Already, page views regularly number in excess of 8000 and the system has been embraced as a way of helping to launch the school's second specialism.

Background

The Hertfordshire & Essex High School, proudly celebrating its centenary across 2009/10, is an 11-18 comprehensive girls school with a mixed sixth form. With over 1030 students, the school prides itself on providing an outstanding educational experience for all.

A Science specialist college for many years, the school prides itself on its primary outreach, adult education and other specialism related programmes.

As a high performing secondary school, (93% 5 A* - C in 2008), the school also has a second specialism as a leadership partner school, working in partnership with national agencies and other schools on ensuring high quality leadership throughout school organisations to ensure positive impact on student learning outcomes.

In 2008, the Herts & Essex gained both the ICT mark, with the strategic leadership of ICT recognised as being "outstanding", and International School Status, in recognition of its work within ICT and its partnerships with overseas schools in three continents.



Challenge

The school had undergone a significant seed change in ICT in recent years, and the next step was to find a cutting edge virtual learning environment that would deliver the promised “*Excellence for All*” 24/7 learning our students deserved.

David Grant, Deputy Headteacher, explains, ‘One of my first tasks at the school was to further expand and integrate the ICT so that we could facilitate a teaching impact outside of school as well as within it. We were engaging with students but we owed it to them to provide something that could take ICT to the next level, take the classroom beyond the school walls and provide them with a future-proofed product capable of appealing to the MySpace generation...’

Solution

In the early Spring of 2008, the school began to investigate an array of VLEs and eventually whittled down the competition to two alternatives.

David Grant commented that “Frog was hands-down the best product I could find. There was clear water between this product and other alternatives. The support mechanisms were there in place and the fact that they are willing to listen to their customers made a huge difference.”

Shortly after, Frog was delivered into the school and work established to ensure a smooth launch to all staff and students. David explains, “We deliberately left a long lead time to iron out any creases we had with delivering the product as a finished article rather than a work in progress. Frogtrade Ltd were superb. At every junction, they were actively seeking solutions and establishing great rapport with our network support team. We were able to network quickly within the Frog schools and all of our issues were solved quickly and efficiently.”

After the official launch to staff, the product was quickly embraced and when students were introduced to the VLE, things really took off;

“We were engaging with students so quickly that we saw possibilities that we hadn’t thought of before. The forums have really helped our student’s network with each other and forms part of our student leadership development, so valuable to the new specialist status.”



“The VLE has helped deliver in three months, the kind of consultation that might originally have taken years to develop.”

Benefits

Teaching Staff

The long lead time has enabled the school to place all of its systems under one expanded FROG umbrella. All of the school information, diaries, email and resource booking are now in one place and the ability to use the school’s MIS from home has significantly enhanced the flexibility of our systems so that staff can now choose to work from home more effectively.

“No memory sticks anymore - how great is that! Staff have loved the ability to work from home and things such as providing work for absent students is so much easier now,” explains David.

The training time on Frog has been divided up into specific twilight sessions to allow drip-drip familiarity.

David testifies “We are clearly feeling our way into the product quickly and efficiently. Staff are steadily teaching themselves the more complex tasks before we get a chance to show them, a testimony to the simplicity of the system.”

Students

The students have embraced the new functionality with a great deal of enthusiasm. The school has ensured that student involvement and feedback is a central part of the process, using focus groups to help change and evaluate the product. The development conversation now engages with all students through the technical forums in-house.

David explains: “I have been amazed by how quickly the students have taken to the product. They were so keen to get started, they even asked for homework!”

Looking Forward

“We are launching to parents and governors shortly, which we hope will enable us to start saving money and resources on things such as sending letters home in the post. We are looking to start trialling functionality such as online reporting so that we can plan for the proposed 2010 deadline, and we will be continually working with Frog to try and develop the product further.”

“We hope to expand our virtual reach into our many feeder primary schools and perhaps even with our overseas partners so that our VLE can become a truly global teaching resource. It is



clear that there is a world of possibilities with the product. Right now, we have hit the ground running and we don't intend to stop. With Frograde's help, I have no doubt we will continue to accelerate our rate of change."