



Keeping in touch with parents through ePortal St Wilfrid's High School and Technology College

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David Whyte, Headteacher, St Wilfrid's High School and Technology College, Blackburn

Installing Facility at St Wilfrid's High School and Technology College in Blackburn is enabling staff to realise their vision and keep promises made to parents.

Headteacher David Whyte said: "You want to communicate as often as possible but when you have such a big school it isn't easy. The only reason we can do it is because of this system."

The 1640 student school is housed in a very new building but there has been a school on the site since the 1960s, converted from an old mill. The new building, opened in 2004, has been fully wired for IT so there is a PC in every room.

That allowed for very fast introduction of online registration and other key management functions but it is in the field of information distribution that staff see the greatest potential.

The school plans to make information available to all its stakeholders through Facility's web-based interface ePortal. "Parents want more information on assessment and more data about their children and all that will now be available. It will revolutionise our relationship with parents," David said.

He also sees Facility's potential for supporting students' education. "It will mean that the things we want to introduce for transformation of learning and for personalised learning will now come about. We promised that to parents and now we will be able to deliver."

The aim fits in with the school's ethos, which is summed up in part of its mission statement: "The main purpose of the school is to provide an excellent education, both academic and social, in a Christian context."

Opening up data to students will also help raise educational standards, David believes. "It is a powerful tool in helping students to know their targets and to see whether they are achieving them. It helps to personalise learning and lets them be interactive."

Assistant Headteacher David Mehers agrees. He also believes it will help to improve behaviour. "The biggest thing is the ability to share information with the students and that would not have been possible with our old system.

"For example, when we record incidents children can see what's been written about them but they also know that their parents can see it. We hope that will improve behaviour."

The school's data manager Chris Stevenson has overseen the introduction of Facility at St Wilfrid's. Although reaction to the change was mixed, the staff generally feel that it is an improvement on the old system.

We were frustrated with the old system because there was a lack of reliability and poor support. Although Facility can be a little difficult to grasp at first it is very flexible. I like the idea that it has one core database. We have had some difficulties but the call centre has been extremely good and helpful so we can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Head David Whyte agrees that the school has formed a good partnership with Serco since the installation. "We wanted a system where the visioning came from the company and Serco has people who are aware of what the system can do, not just how it works. We want to empower people throughout the school and we think this will do it."

